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# Confession of Lorraine Herschel

BY  
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# THE CONFESSION OF LORRAINE HERSCHEL

A STORY OF MYSTERY

BY  
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AUTHOR OF  
"AN UNCONSCIOUS CRIME," ETC.



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## CHAPTER I.

ROOM 47, BROWN'S HOTEL.

"Mr. Seabrooke."

The name uttered in a low, frightened tone, almost inarticulate.

The man addressed, day clerk and manager of Brown's Hotel, Baltimore, failed to hear the call. With three others he was deeply immersed in the soul-absorbing mysteries of dominoes.

"Please, Mr. Seabrooke."

A backward jerk of the head, a glance over the left shoulder, conveyed the fact that the faint cry had reached his ears.

"Well—what do you want?" Not in any pleasant tone; he was busy, and did not relish the idea of being interrupted.

"I would like to speak to you one moment, sir."

"Well—sail in and speak! Don't be all day about it. I'm busy!"

The girl who had interrupted the busy (?) clerk flushed slightly. She was Rachel Adler, chambermaid for the third floor of the hotel, the floor where the regular boarders had their rooms. A slight, pale creature, possibly not over the age of eighteen, perhaps not that old; to all



appearances not overly strong. Not a girl one would have selected for arduous labor. A pretty girl (if the term is admissible), if it were not for the thin, delicate form, the wan, pale face, the frightened eyes. The face, though pale and haggard for one of her years, was intelligent, and to all appearances—judging from the first impression—one would have said that she had known better days; had not always been a hard-worked servant in a third-class hotel.

She spoke again, her voice trembling: "I would not interrupt you, sir, if I did not think it necessary, and"—here she hesitated—"I would rather speak to you privately."

With a half muttered exclamation of annoyance, the clerk pushed back his chair from the table, and, arising, made three strides toward the stairway, upon which the girl stood, leaning upon her broom with one hand, holding a dustpan in the other.

Growling at each step, Mr. Seabrooke slowly climbed the stairs.

"Well, what is this private matter you want to speak to me about?" he muttered, standing on the step below her.

"I can't get in room 47," she said, a frightened look in her gray eyes.

"Is that all?" he cried, angrily; "your pass key will open the door. You don't have to bother me about it. I ain't got nothin' to do with the rooms except to put people in 'em."

"I have tried my pass key, Mr. Seabrooke, and I can't get it in the keyhole. The door is locked from the inside."

"Knock on it, then! The people must be asleep, and they'll get no breakfast this mornin', either. It's nearly ten o'clock," leaning over the baluster and consulting the clock in the office.

"That is what frightened me, sir," replied the girl. "The



gentlemen usually get up early. I have never found them in the room when I came to make it up. They take a walk together early in the morning. I have seen them several times."

"The best people oversleep themselves sometimes," said the clerk. "Knock on the door," he suggested again.

"I have rapped, sir, twice; no one answered me."

"Did you knock hard?"

"Very hard, sir."

"Humph! You ain't got strength enough in your whole body to knock hard enough to wake anybody," he said, contemptuously.

The pale face flushed.

"I am not strong, Mr. Seabrooke, scarcely strong enough to perform my duties. I rapped loud enough to be heard by anyone. You are unkind to insult me."

Tears stood in the gray eyes. The man looked disgusted. "Bah!" he muttered, "you git insulted mighty quick. You're too good—too tender-hearted to be a chamber-maid."

The girl made no reply. With the corner of her apron she wiped away the gathering tears, leaning the broom against the baluster to enable her to use one hand.

"Well—is that all?" finally demanded Seabrooke, anxious to return to his game.

"Won't you please come up stairs with me and see if you cannot arouse the gentlemen?" anxiously murmured the girl.

"I don't see any use of it," impatiently responded the man; then adding: "Go hammer on the door. Holler 'Fire! Murder!' or anything you like; or let 'em sleep, if they want to. You can make up the room after dinner," and with this he started down the stairs. With a quick



movement the girl followed him, and, reaching his side, placed one thin hand on his shoulder, as if to stop him.

"Mr. Seabrooke, I wish you would come up stairs with me, sir. Everything is so quiet in that room. I am afraid something is wrong. The gas is still burning, and at full head. You know that is unusual, sir."

The tone, appealing, fearful, beseeching, caused the angry clerk to stop and hesitate; then, muttering a low curse, he turned and ascended the stairs; reaching the landing, he said, in a harsh tone:

"As you seem to be so much afraid, I'll go up. But if I find them men only asleep, and you not able to wake 'em—by gosh, I'll do my level best to have you fired." Then, as if a sudden thought had entered his mind, he added, "and if they have gone to sleep and left the gas burning all night, I'll make 'em pay extra for it." With this truly characteristic speech, the gentlemanly (?) clerk of Brown's Hotel started to climb the second flight, followed by the silent and trembling girl.

Along the ill-lighted hall to the very last room shuffled Seabrooke, stopping at last before a door upon whose dirty white panels was painted the number 47.

"Give me your pass key," he growled.

Silently the girl obeyed.

Stooping, the man endeavored to insert the key, useless; it was as the girl had said, the door was locked from the inside, and it was impossible to insert the key into the lock.

The clerk, after several ineffectual trials, straightened his stooping body. As he did so, his eye caught the gleam of the gas burning within the room. It could be plainly seen through the glass transom over the door.

"You're right; the gas is burning at full head," he muttered. "I'll give 'em a knock."



Bang! His clenched fist struck the panels.  
Bang! bang!! he continued to pound.  
No reply came from within the closed room.  
"I'll try my foot!" he cried savagely.

But the severe blows administered by the angry man failed to produce any effect, except to bring the loungers from the office below hurrying up the stairs.

Resting from his labors, Seabrooke stared at the door. For the first time he began to feel alarmed. A vague sensation of undefinable awe took possession of his mind. Surely no live man could sleep through such a racket.

"What's the matter?" whispered one of the bystanders, a lady whose room was on the same floor, and who had been startled by the sound of the clerk's blows.

No one replied. No one could very well answer. They were all equally mystified.

"I'll bust it in," muttered Seabrooke, at last. "Bring me an axe," turning to the porter, who stood open-mouthed as his elbow.

That individual (a negro) hurried away to obey his superior. In a short time he returned with the required article.

"I hate to do this," muttered the clerk, taking the axe, "but durned if I ain't worried. So here goes."

Bang! bang! sounded the implement upon the door. Crash! The panel gave way. A flood of light burst out into the dark hall, lighting up the faces of the expectant ones without.

Inserting his arm through the jagged hole, Seabrooke turned the key, opened the door, and entered the room.

It appeared deserted. The beds, two in number, had not been slept in, a small table immediately beneath the gas jet was littered with writing materials. A chair stood







near. Mechanically Seabrooke turned off the gas, muttering:

“Mighty strange, not a blessed soul here; where on earth kin they have gone?”

The curious crowd had by this time followed the clerk, and joined him in staring about the walls, as if in search of an explanation for the strange circumstance. Finally recovering himself, the manager of the institution began an investigation of the apartment. A few strides brought him to the bed, the foot-board of which faced the table; a step farther, and then, with a cry of horror, he fell back—fairly into the arms of one of the crowd who had followed him—gasping in broken, hoarse tones, the words:

“Murder! Foul murder! What a horrible affair!”



## CHAPTER II.

## A POLICE INVESTIGATION.

"Murder."

The word passed from mouth to mouth, while the pale faces of those who stood as if spellbound, gave evidence of the effect of the clerk's horrified cry.

A scream rang out upon the deathly stillness of the close room. It aroused the bystanders from their inactivity; they became men and women in that one brief instant.

The scream emanated from the chambermaid. She was found lying an inert mass upon the floor.

She had fainted.

Women faint so easily!

But then—she was but a poor, weak creature.

Seabrooke stood grasping the foot-board of the cheap bedstead as if for support; his eyes still fixed upon—something lying between the two beds. The other bedstead prevented the crowd from seeing the object that the clerk stood staring at with eyes that seemed to start from their sockets, but as the chambermaid's cry aroused them to activity, they surged forward; an eager, curious, but still frightened crowd, to catch a glimpse of the hidden object. A groan of sickening horror, a cry of pity, went up from the curious ones as their gaze fell upon that which they wished to see, and which, now that they had feasted their curious eyes upon it, gratified that unnatural desire which



dwells in the human breast to behold any uncouth or horrible thing, they turned from it. A sickening feeling of awe at heart, an overwhelming sensation of pity for the helpless, lifeless thing, that could not now be benefited nor bettered by the feeling.

Stretched at full length upon the floor, one-half the body still hidden by the bedstead, the head and breast alone visible—lay a man; a look of agony upon the clear-cut and noble face; a flowing beard, half concealing a ghastly wound in the throat, from which the blood still trickled.

The curling locks of dark-brown hair were matted and stuck together with the blood which, but a few hours before, had coursed vigorously through the body of as perfect a specimen of physical manhood as the world ever saw.

One white, once strong hand, now helpless and weak in death, was pressed to the high forehead, concealing the eyes; but not hiding the look of agony which the compressed lips and drawn features clearly revealed. The carpet immediately under the head of the dead man was one mass of blood! A dark pool that caused the onlookers to draw back and shudder as they beheld it; that almost turned their life current to ice as they gazed.

“What shall we do?” at last whispered one of the bystanders.

The words seemed to have a reviving effect upon the man Seabrooke. Turning from the ghastly sight, he slowly drew his hand across his eyes, as if to wipe from them the vision of that which they had beheld.

Then, wetting his dry lips with the tip of his tongue, he said, in a dazed, dreamy way: “Yes, something must be done.”



His eyes roving about the apartment fell upon the unconscious form of the chambermaid. She was slowly being restored to consciousness by the lady from the adjacent room and one of the men.

"What ails her?" he asked, slowly.

"She fainted," replied one of the men.

"Fainted, eh? Too weak for a chambermaid," he mechanically muttered. "Yes, something must be done," he added, sharply, as if suddenly impressed with that fact.

"The police should be notified," volunteered a guest of the house, by way of a suggestion.

"Yes, and a doctor," cried another.

"A doctor is unnecessary," solemnly said a black-clothed gentleman. "That poor creature needs not the services of a physician. The police, however, should be summoned. I am a minister of the Gospel. Has this man any friends or relatives who should be informed of his decease? If so, I will assume the sad responsibility of breaking the news."

No one vouchsafed an answer, but two of the men present hurriedly left the room. They were going to announce the murder to the first policeman they met upon the street.

The man of God—after waiting for an answer to his inquiry, and receiving none—turned to the corpse, and with a sad, sorrowful countenance, stood gazing upon the white, cold face.

"Struck down in the strength of his manhood," he murmured, as if to himself. "Oh, God, thy ways are mysterious." Then the thin lips slowly moved in silent prayer—prayer for the soul of this one; a stranger—but a human being—one of God's creatures.

At this moment came the sound of advancing footsteps—footsteps in the hall. Bold, firm tread, that foretokened



the coming of determined, fearless men; those who must now take the case in hand, ferret out the cold-blooded, heartless assassin who had done this thing.

The police!

Gradually they grew nearer; more distinctly could the firm, bold tread be heard; the bystanders heard the sound, the clerk recognized it, and drew back to the writing table.

The officers entered the room; two patrolmen and a sergeant.

"Stand by the door!" commanded the sergeant; then advancing to the bed, the patrolmen obeying their superior.

"A horrible affair!" muttered the officer, glancing keenly at the corpse. "Who knows anything about this?" he demanded, his eyes sweeping the apartment, resting an instant upon each of the faces before him, ending with Seabrooke.

"No one, Sergeant," replied the clerk, coming forward.

"Tell me what you know," then, with another sweeping glance, "first, who found the corpse?"

"I did, Sergeant."

"Accidentally? No, I can see the door has been broken in. You did this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who called upon you to do so?"

"The chambermaid."

"Where is she?"

"Over there," with a sweep of the hand toward the still unconscious girl.

"Fainted?" looking at the girl.

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me all you know," turning from the girl.

In as few words as possible the clerk, respectful in the



presence of an officer of the law, related all that had happened. Concluding, he said:

"The girl seemed so frightened and was so anxious to have the door opened, that I sent for an axe and smashed it in."

"The girl was frightened, eh?"

"Yes, Sergeant."

"Humph! Anybody else here know anything about this case?"

"They don't know nothin' about it, Sergeant. They all came when I began to hammer at the door."

"Clear the room, then," sharply.

Slowly and reluctantly the crowd moved toward the door. They would have preferred remaining.

The room being cleared, the minister being the last to go, the Sergeant turned to the clerk again.

"This girl," with a gesture toward the chambermaid, who was beginning to show signs of returning consciousness. "This girl. How long has she been in your house?"

"About four months."

"You say you are the clerk here?"

"Day clerk and manager. We have a night man."

"Your name?"

"Alfred Seabrooke."

"Well, Mr. Seabrooke, do you think this girl knows anything about this affair?" watching the coarse face of the man attentively.

The clerk pursed his lips. "Well—I don't know," he said, slowly.

"I asked you what you thought?"

"I don't think she does," replied Seabrooke.

With a shrug of the shoulders, the policeman turned and walked over to one of the patrolmen. A few hurried



words in a low tone, and the man left the apartment. Then a command to his companion, and he, too, hurried away. The Sergeant, now alone with the clerk and the unconscious girl, began pacing the apartment.

"Too bad," he muttered, glancing at the corpse as he passed it. "Too bad;" then turning to Seabrooke, he remarked: "The coroner will soon be here, and with him a detective from the Central Station. We will soon be able to begin an investigation."

"I hope you'll be successful," observed the clerk.

"We will have a try for it, at any rate," briefly replied the officer.

With this remark he turned and walked to one of the two windows which afforded light to the apartment. Glancing out of the one nearest the wall, he uttered an exclamation which he repressed almost as soon as he had expressed it. Seabrooke, whose ears were good, glanced inquiringly at him; but the Sergeant gave him no satisfaction. If he had discovered anything strange, he kept it to himself. A faint sigh at that moment attracted the attention of both. It emanated from the girl, who, they now saw, had recovered consciousness, and was sitting up, staring in a bewildered manner about the room.

The officer approached her.

"You are feeling all right now?" he inquired, glancing keenly at her.

"Yes, I am better," she murmured, rising slowly to her feet, being assisted by the Sergeant, who remarked, shortly: "Glad of it—a detective officer will be here before long, and he will probably want to ask you a few questions about this affair."

She turned pale, and averted her frightened eyes, and like a murmur came from her parted lips the words:



"I know but little that will prove of value. I could not get in the room, and so went to Mr. Seabrooke for advice and assistance," then, looking him appealingly in the eyes, added, "I am very weak, sir; I would like to retire; I am ill—indeed I am."

A look of suspicion darkened the brow of the officer.

"She knows more than she pretends to," flashed through his mind. "She is weak, trembling; gives evidence of fear;" then aloud he said: "No, I cannot grant your request. You will be obliged to remain here until the detective arrives."

At his words the girl's face grew ghastly, unnatural in its extreme pallor. Her large eyes glanced hopelessly from one side of the apartment to the other, finally resting upon the corpse. Reeling, she would have fallen, had not the officer caught her and placed her in a chair.

"Come, come," he said, more kindly than he had yet spoken, experiencing a feeling of pity for this weak creature. "Come, don't give way like this. I don't think you killed the man, nor are implicated in it in any way. The idea occurred to me that perhaps you know more about it than you wanted to tell. Explain one thing to me; then you can go."

She glanced hopefully up into his face; not a bad one, by any means—hard and stern from contact with crime, but softened now as he stood looking down upon her. Taking encouragement from his changed manner, the girl replied, her voice stronger and clearer than it had yet been.

"I will explain anything I can, sir. Indeed, I will," so earnestly.

"Good!" muttered the man to his beard. Seabrooke stood silently by, drinking in every word spoken. "Well,



then, it is this," said the officer. "When you knocked on the door, and could not make the occupants of the room hear you, why didn't you raise the window in the hall, and get out on the landing of the fire escape, and, walking along to the window of this room, which opens upon it, rap and see if that wouldn't awaken the sleeping men? It would have been less trouble to have done this than to go down two flights of stairs to summon the clerk. Come! Why didn't you do that?"

During the officer's speech, the girl, who had listened eagerly at first, with the faint flush of expectancy upon her pale cheeks, changed color. The appealing, hopeful look in the gray eyes grew anxious, hopeless again; when he had concluded, she said, faintly, catching her breath in short gasps:

"I could not do that, sir; I would have feared to make the attempt," beginning to sob.

"Perhaps she didn't think of it," broke in the clerk at this juncture. "I didn't myself; if I had, I wouldn't have busted in the door."

The officer paid no attention to the remark, simply stood looking down upon the nervous, agitated girl.

"Well, we'll know more about it later on," he said, finally. "Ah, Treadwell, I am glad you have come," addressing a stranger who had at that moment entered the room. The newcomer acknowledged the greeting with a simple nod of the head, and then glanced quickly about him.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE DETECTIVE INVESTIGATES.

The girl continued to sob, each convulsion racking and shaking her delicate frame; Seabrooke, feeling, somehow, that he had been slighted, but not quite understanding just how, stood between the writing table and the Sergeant of police. The newcomer, called Treadwell by the officer, stood just inside the door, and not far from the weeping girl, hat in hand, his inquisitive eyes roving about the room.

Finally he spoke, as if in answer to the policeman's salutation.

"You sent for me, Sergeant, so I came as quickly as possible," the eyes resting curiously upon the chambermaid.

"Very good," remarked the Sergeant; then to the girl, "Come, come, my girl. Don't go on like that. We are not going to kill you. You need feel no alarm;" then whispering a few words in the newcomer's ear, he turned to Seabrook, and said:

"Mr. Seabrooke, this is Mr. Daniel Treadwell, one of our shrewdest secret agents. He will wish to question you later; also this girl. You will be rendering us valuable assistance by keeping this lady where no one can visit her, and where she can be found when wanted by us. You understand," winking significantly.

"I think I do, Sergeant," replied the clerk, with a pan-



tomimic movement as of turning a key in a lock. The officer nodded. "Precisely," he said; "now take the girl with you and go. Mr. Treadwell and I wish to be alone. Don't go far, and—look out," with another wink in the direction of the girl.

Seabrooke nodded, and laying his hand on the girl's shoulder, said:

"Come, Rachel, we'll get out. These gentlemen want to be alone."

"What are they going to do, Mr. Seabrooke?" she whispered.

"Never you mind; you come with me. They'll tend to their own business," and he pushed her before him.

"They won't confine me, Mr. Seabrooke?" the faint voice cried, the frail form swaying from the effect of the rough action.

The man was about to reply, when Treadwell, the detective—shaking his head in the negative, to caution Seabrooke to silence—came rapidly toward her.

"No, no, my child," he said softly, smoothly. "You shall not be locked up. You go with this gentleman and compose yourself. I wish to talk with you presently. Think of all you know about this affair, and when I come to question you, tell me freely."

With a sharp glance into the piercing eyes of the detective, in which she seemed to read truth and honor, the girl turned and slowly left the room, followed by Seabrooke, who signified by a gesture the fact that he would keep his eye upon her.

They had no sooner gone than Treadwell, turning to the Sergeant, said in a sharp, business-like tone:

"What is this affair?"

"Murder, I think."



"How much have you discovered?"

"Very little. I can tell you all in a few minutes."

"We'll let that wait, then. Where is the corpse?"

Silently the Sergeant crossed the room to the bed. In a few seconds the detective stood by the dead man.

"A brutal deed," he muttered, stooping over the body. "A butcher committed this crime. Move that bedstead out of the way, Sergeant."

Walking to the opposite side of the bed, the officer rolled the piece of furniture back toward the wall, revealing the entire body. With a quick cry the detective sprang forward and picked up two articles which lay upon the floor. They had been concealed by the bedstead.

"What have you found?" cried the policeman.

Silently the detective displayed his find.

A bloody razor, a crumpled, blood-stained scrap of paper!

A cry of surprise from the Sergeant.

"The weapon with which the crime was committed!" he cried.

"Beyond a doubt," muttered Treadwell, at the same time smoothing out the scrap of paper. An exclamation of satisfaction escaped him, as he finished the task.

"If I mistake not, this paper will render us valuable aid in ferreting out the criminal," he said, slowly.

The sergeant approached him.

"What is it?" he inquired.

"An express money envelope," replied Treadwell, showing it to him.

For an instant the two officers silently examined the stained and torn clew. An ordinary manilla paper money envelope of the Southern Express Company. From the address they learned that the money which it had once



contained had been sent to Roger Deveau, Brown's Hotel, from Maloney & Co., Owensboro, Ky., and the amount had been \$2,500.

Treadwell broke the silence.

"This envelope has either been addressed to the murdered man or the murderer. We can easily ascertain which by referring to the hotel register or by questioning the clerk. Search the room carefully, and see if there is any further clew."

Placing the envelope and razor in his pocket, the officer did as bidden, while the detective, stooping over the corpse, gently raised the hand, which concealed the eyes and a portion of the forehead.

A cry of pity escaped him as he did so.

"This man was blind, Sergeant!" he cried, in a low tone.

His companion hastily crossed the apartment.

"Blind?" he cried.

"Yes. See!"

With pitying eyes the officers gazed upon the exposed face and lofty brow. The detective had spoken truly. The dead man had been blind. Extending diagonally from the right eyebrow down across the eye, the upper portion of the nose, and the left eye and cheek, was a hideous cicatrice, like the scar produced by a severe burn. The left eye was entirely gone.

"Poor fellow!" muttered the sergeant. "He fell an easy victim. Blind—in total darkness—the assassin, with stealthy footstep, could, without difficulty, commit the fiendish deed. It seems to me that some men have no hearts."

Silently and reverently the detective covered the dead man with the white counterpane from the bed. Then,



crossing the room to the window, he turned to the sergeant (who had followed him) and said in a low tone, as if fearful of waking the dead.

"The coroner will be here soon?"

"I have sent for him. I expected him with you."

"Tell me now what you have discovered."

The sergeant did so.

"Then you have an idea that this girl is concealing something?"

"I could almost swear to it."

"She seemed nervous when you spoke of the landing?"

"Extremely so."

"How did you come to speak of the fire escape? Did any one mention the fact of one being there?"

"No. Accidentally glancing out of the window, I saw that the landing of the escape extended from the window of the hall to this one. The thought occurred to me that by this means the assassin had gained entrance to the room and, thinking perhaps the girl knew something of it, I put the question."

"With the result that you frightened her terribly."

"About that."

"What were the exact words of her answer?"

The sergeant repeated them.

"Reasonable enough," musingly. "Seabrooke, the clerk, stated that he had not thought of the fire escape, or he would not have broken in the door. I heard him as I was about to enter. Perhaps the girl did not think of it, or, if she did, was too much frightened to make use of it. Some women are timid and nervous, and not all of them would fancy climbing out of a third-story window upon a shaky old iron fire escape."

A cynical smile came to the bearded lips of the sergeant.



"You want to give the girl the benefit of the doubt, I see," he said.

"Why, yes. I would hate to think that girl guilty of trying to thwart justice. She don't look it."

Again the sarcastic smile.

"You can't tell anything by a woman's looks what she is capable of. You go to her and put her through a little sharp questioning—not too harsh, because you can see she can't stand it, but positive, firm, leading questions, and you'll find she knows more than you think she does, and is a darn sight deeper than either of us give her credit for. You mark my words."

The sergeant spoke warmly. A faint sigh came from his companion.

"Perhaps so," he said.

The sound of footsteps in the hall.

"The coroner," laconically remarked the sergeant.

"Delay the inquest for an hour," cried Treadwell. "I want to interview this girl before she is brought before the coroner. I think I can get at the facts better by a private interview than in any other way."

"I agree with you," replied the other, and Treadwell left the room as the coroner and a hastily impaneled jury entered it.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE INTERVIEW.

The detective hurried along the corridor, down the staircase to the office. The porter stood gaping up the stairs as the officer came down.

"Has de 'quest begun, sah?" he asked, his eyes rolling.

"Not yet. Where is Mr. Seabrooke?"

"Guess he done gone to de room."

"What room?" impatiently.

"De room whar Rachel Adler am."

"Oh!—the chambermaid."

A succession of guttural sounds came from the darky.

"Where is this room?"

"I'll show you, sah."

Up the stairs flew the negro, along the hall to a dirty, dingy passage, seemingly in another and older part of the building, stopping at last before a rough, unpainted door.

"He's in dar," he gurgled, smiling mysteriously.

"All right. You can go, and here is a quarter for you," flinging the coin, which the darky caught deftly.

"Thank'ee, sah," and the sable porter disappeared from sight.

After a moment's hesitation the detective rapped on the door.

"Come in!" he heard the voice of Seabrooke cry out.

Pushing the door, he found it opened readily. There



was neither latch nor lock upon the structure, only a loop of rope, possibly two feet in length, which was secured from a nail upon the inside of the door to a similar article driven into the wall, upon one side of the entrance. The door opened as far as the rope would permit. Inserting his hand, Treadwell loosened one end of the primitive fastening and entered.

The apartment, small and narrow, was but scantily furnished. In point of fact, there was but little room for furniture. A narrow iron cot bed filled one side completely, while a small, cheap trunk close to the window nearly filled the space upon that side. Two splint-bottomed chairs stood near the center of the room, and from a number of nails, driven in the wall to the left of the door, the scanty wardrobe of the occupant depended. Not a comfortable apartment, by any manner of means. Seated upon the trunk, his head bowed to escape striking the low ceiling, which came to within a few inches of the window, on that side of the room, sat Seabrooke, his eyes, watchful, keenly supervisient, fixed upon the form of the girl—Rachel Adler, the chambermaid, who lay recumbent upon the cot, her face hidden in the dirty pillow, sobbing softly. She did not even move as the detective entered, although she must have heard him.

"I have kept my eye on her," observed Seabrooke, shifting his gaze to the detective's face.

"I did not tell you to remain and guard her," replied the officer impatiently.

"But there ain't any lock on the door and she would a' skipped if I hadn't," muttered the man.

"You can go now. I think you will be needed upstairs. The coroner has arrived and your statement will be needed at the inquest. I will attend to the girl."



The fellow moved slowly toward the door, opened it and passed out. A sudden thought came to the detective. He hurried after him.

"Seabrook!" he called, opening the door.

The clerk, who had gone but a few steps, stopped and returned.

"What was the name of the man who occupied room 47?"

"There was two men in 47, sir."

"Two men? You did not mention this fact before," sharply.

"Didn't I? I guess I didn't think. I supposed everybody knew it. A man will git flustered mightily over a thing like this," in an apologetic tone of voice.

"So there were two men," musingly. "Where is the other?"

"You've got me there; I don't know."

A light flashed upon the detective's mind.

"The names of the two men?"

"One was Roger Deveau, the other Henry Allen."

Roger Deveau!—the name upon the envelope.

"Which of these two is the dead man upstairs?"

"Mr. Deveau."

"Ah, thank you! You can go now. I guess I can get along all right without you," and, turning from the clerk, he re-entered the room, and approached the girl.

She was in the same position as when he had first entered, but the sobs had ceased, and she was lying perfectly quiet.

Drawing a chair to the side of the cot, he addressed her by name.

"Rachel," he said, softly.

She gave no evidence of having heard him.



"My girl," he continued, "you have no reason to fear me. I am your friend, and have no desire to do you harm. I think you can give me some information concerning the sad affair which has taken place here, and all I ask of you is to tell me just what and how much you do know."

Still no response; only a nervous shudder, a quickening of the breath.

For a moment the detective waited; then, seeing that the girl was determined to remain silent, he adopted another plan—one that he believed would unseal her lips in case she really was trying to conceal her knowledge.

In a tone expressive of knowledge he said:

"You will not speak? You are acting unwisely, and your reasons for thus acting I cannot comprehend. Let me tell you something: I already know who has committed this deed."

With a sudden start, a quick convulsive movement, the girl sat erect in the bed, and stared at him with wild eyes. Without waiting for her to speak, the detective continued:

"Yes, I have found in the room evidence that points conclusively to the murderer. Before an hour has passed it will be proven at the inquest that the man who shared Roger Deveau's room foully murdered him. See! Here is the bloody razor; here the envelope that brought the money for which Henry Allen took the life of his companion. You see you cannot shield him by remaining silent, still your evidence, I believe, will go far toward proving these facts to be true. So come; tell me all."

During the speech the girl sat staring as one fascinated at the shrewd, yet kindly face of the officer. When he drew from his pocket the razor and envelope her eyes shifted to the ghastly objects, and seemed to be examining them closely. Gradually a change came over her face;



the eyes lost the wild stare, the thin lips parted, showing the white teeth, a look of knowledge illuminated her eyes and a sigh of relief escaped her parted lips.

"You found these things in the room?" she inquired, in a low tone, glancing up into the face of the officer.

"Yes."

"And he, Mr. Allen, has he been found?"

"Not yet; but he cannot escape us."

"You have never seen him?"

"No; but we can, of course, get a description of him from the clerk."

"If you saw him you would not think him guilty of such a terrible thing," shuddering.

"Are you well acquainted with him?" questioned Treadwell.

"No, not very," she replied, slowly.

"You have seen him?"

"Oh, yes."

"And talked with him?"

A look of surprise came to her eyes; then in a soft, tender voice she said:

"I have never talked with him, sir. He cannot talk. He is dumb!"

Treadwell started in amazement. Strange companions, truly. One blind, the other dumb.

"Not deaf?" he asked.

"No, sir, only dumb," sadly.

"That fact will be of vast assistance to me," remarked the officer. "Now, then, will you assist me further?"

"How can I?" she murmured plaintively. "How can I?"

Treadwell began to show signs of impatience.

"Come, come!" he said quickly. "Time is flying. I must know what you are trying to keep hidden. I do



not wish to subject you to the trying ordeal of harsh questioning by the coroner, and it will be necessary, if you do not come out frankly and make a clean breast of it. Your actions are strange. Why should you seek to shield this man?"

His sharp tones brought the red blood to the girl's pale face, and aroused her spirit, for, rising to her feet and confronting him, she replied, her eyes flashing, her form erect:

"To my mind it is a doubtful policy to attempt to force from a woman anything that she does not wish to divulge; by kindness much more can be attained than by harshness at all times. I will admit that up to a few moments ago you have acted considerately and in a gentlemanly manner, but, believing me stubborn or possessed with a desire to thwart justice, you have forgotten yourself and addressed me in an improper manner. Haste is ever inconsiderate. I am not attempting to shield Mr. Allen, sir, although I do not believe him guilty of the crime of murder. I have told the sergeant of police all I know of the horrible affair. I could not say more if placed upon the rack. You have shown me certain articles which you claim will fasten this crime upon Mr. Allen. I hope you will find you are mistaken, but if you are convinced of their efficacy I would suggest that you look to them, not to me, for your success.

"Will you kindly leave me, sir? I am in distress, sorely fatigued."

The words, the action caused the detective to stand and stare at her in perfect amazement. He had not supposed the girl possessed of such spirit, had seen Seabrooke push her roughly before him in the room 47 but an hour before, and she had not even seemed to notice it—had, in fact,



seemed overcome with agitation. Now, imperiously almost, she turns upon him, and in choice, well-selected language, tells him to go about his business and leave her in peace. Well, a decided change, in point of fact, and one that puzzled while it astonishes him. He wasted little time, however, in thought. There was something else to claim his attention, and so, with an involuntary but expressive shrug of the shoulders, he said, quietly:

"Pardon me if I have given offense. It was not my intention to seem harsh nor overbearing. I simply felt impatient and forgot myself. I regret that I cannot accede to your wish to be left alone. You know the coroner awaits us in the room where the corpse is lying. It is necessary that you should be there. Come."

Growing pale and weak at his words, the girl gave vent to a half-repressed sigh and then, without saying anything further, preceded him from the room, up the stairs, along the hall, to the room where the coroner sat, impatiently waiting upon Treadwell, to begin proceedings.



## CHAPTER V.

## TREADWELL PUZZLED.

The inquest was not of long duration; the witnesses were few, and had but little to say. The girl, Rachel Adler, pale and trembling, hesitatingly repeated what she had before stated, and was excused. But the silent but apparently convincing proofs in the hands of the detective, together with the evidence of several of the witnesses, seemed sufficient for the coroner's jury, who brought in a verdict to the effect that "Roger Deveau, the deceased, had met his death at the hands of Henry Allen."

The several little items of testimony, such as the deposition of the express agent to the effect that he had delivered a money package to Mr. Deveau only the day before, and the statement of a neighboring saloon-keeper that he had heard censorious words addressed by the deceased to his companion at one time, rating him for extravagance, went far to prove that "Henry Allen did feloniously and in cold blood take the life of Roger Deveau by severing the jugular vein with a razor."

Now that it was given out that Henry Allen, a mute, had committed this deed, it became necessary to find him in order to deliver him up to justice, and so Daniel Treadwell, a man celebrated upon the police force of Baltimore as a marvel of shrewdness and perspicacity, began his work of trailing by finding out all he possibly could of the relations existing between the two strange companions



by "sweating" the clerk. The chambermaid had gone to her room immediately after the inquest. She seemed weak and nervous. Judging from the unwonted color upon her cheeks, she appeared burning up with fever, and so she obtained permission from the clerk to go to her room and bed.

"You will oblige me by closing the door," said Treadwell when he and the clerk were alone in the private room of the latter.

Seabrooke silently obeyed him, and then occupied a chair opposite the detective.

"How long have Roger Deveau and Henry Allen been stopping with you?" was the first question.

The clerk pursed up his lips and threw back his head in order to assist his brain in earnest calculation of time.

"'Bout three months," he replied, finally.

"Relate the circumstances attending their arrival here."

"Well, to tell the truth, there wasn't nothin' strange about their comin'. Still, if you want to know I'll tell you. First you must know that ole man Brown, who had kept this hotel for forty years, died about two weeks before these men came here. The property fell to his oldest daughter, a woman about forty-five years old, who lives in Annapolis, and who don't keer a darn about hotel business. She put the ole buildin' in my charge, an' let me run it to suit myself. Ole man Brown use ter do a good deal of farmers' trade, but there ain't nothin' in that line—meals at a quarter a head, lodgin's at the same price, and all the dirt and litter them fellers make. So, when she put me in charge I jist make up my mind that I would cut down expenses and take in boarders by the week, an' fill the house up with 'em. More money in the long run in weekly boarders, I kin tell you. They keep up many a



hotel. So I put an advertisement in the Sun, stating that nice rooms and good meals could be had here at reasonable prices, and 'it wasn't long before I had all the best rooms taken. You see, this is a good location, right on Low street, only a few blocks from Baltimore street, and near Gay, an' lots of clerks an' young fellers came here for rooms."

"Cut this part of it," cried the detective, impatiently. "Come down to what I want to know."

The fellow's loquacity annoyed him.

"I am leadin' up to it, Mr. Treadwell; all this is part of it," replied Seabrooke, earnestly.

"All right, then; go ahead."

"Well, then, one mornin', about half past nine, a hack stopped before the hotel an' two men got out. One of 'em was a tall, powerful-lookin' man, with long, curly, brown hair, jist beginnin' to be streaked with gray. A man about fifty, I should jedge. He had a long beard, that covered his face and across his forehead was a big scar, which covered his eyes, too. He was blind. The scar told me that. He is dead, upstairs now. The other man looked older. His hair cut short, different from the other, was white as snow, and he hadn't nary a sign of whiskers on his face. His eyes were good enough. They were quick an' active. Seemed to be dancin' in his head, an' looked as if they could go right through a man. He led the other man into the office an' up to the desk.

"'You have comfortable rooms here?' asked the blind man, in a deep voice.

"'Yes, sir,' I answered.

"'Where we can be free from intrusion and noise?' he said.

"'Yes, sir. I'll give you two good rooms that I know will suit you,' I told him.



"‘We will need but one,’ he said, a kinder sad smile upon his face.

"‘We cannot be separated. He is my eyes. I am his tongue. I am blind, as you see; my companion is dumb.’

"I stood an’ looked at ’em in surprise for a minit. They knocked me out. Funny; two men to help each other along, one feller to see, the other to talk.

"‘All right, sir,’ I said at last. ‘I’ll give you room 47. That is on the top floor. You won’t be annoyed by noise from the street or office and you kin be by yourselves.’

"‘We will take it,’ said the blind man, while the dumb man acted as if it suited him, also.

"They never said a word about price. So I charged ’em a dollar a day each. They would need a good deal of waitin’ on, and I thought they could stand it. They never kicked, but paid the bill every week like honest men, although they owe me four days’ board now. But I won’t kick about that. You can’t expect a dead man to pay board."

"Go on! go on! Never mind the board!" The detective was growing impatient.

The clerk glanced at him from the corners of his eyes semi-reproachfully, and then said:

"There ain’t any more to say. They took the room, had their baggage sent up—two big grips only—and they have been here ever since.

"So this is all you know of them?"

"All."

"Did they appear to be warm friends?"

"Like brothers. I never did see two men who seemed so lovin’ to each other as them two. They went out walkin’ every day, and would be gone an hour or so. They never stayed in the office much, but when they did they used ter



talk an' laugh, as though they hadn't a care in the world."

"Talk and laugh? I thought you said one of the men was dumb?"

"So he was, but he used to talk to the blind man with his fingers, take hold of his hand and press it in different ways. The blind man would answer him, sometimes the same way, but offener by speakin'."

"Then you don't think they quarreled?"

"Oh, once or twice I've heard the blind man givin' the other man fits about spendin' a good deal of money in some way or another. I think he used ter send it or give it to a woman."

"Who?"

"The dumb man, Mr. Allen. Mind you, I ain't sure of this, but from several things I've heard the blind man say I come to that conclusion."

"A woman," mused Treadwell. "There is usually a woman in the case. Lecoq was known to have said: 'Show me the woman in the case and I'll show you the criminal.' I wonder if there is a woman in this case." He remained silent, his brain busy. The saloon-keeper had mentioned the fact that he had heard the blind man use strong language regarding extravagance on the part of the other. Perhaps it was as Seabrooke said.

"I must try to find this woman," he muttered to himself.

Arousing himself, he said to the clerk, who sat silently watching him.

"One other thing, Mr. Seabrooke. This girl, Rachel Adler, your chambermaid?"

"One of 'em, sir; we have two," corrected Seabrooke.

"It does not matter. What do you know of her?"

"Nothin'," laconically.



The detective stared at him in surprise.

"Nothing?" he repeated. "Do you engage young girls to work for you without investigating their characters, without requiring references?"

The clerk fidgeted in his chair and grew red in the face.

"Well, not as a rule; but this gal was engaged by the missus, who seemed to take a great likin' to her. She was here on a business matter, the missus was, and the gal, Rachel, came in answer to an advertisement in the paper. I asked her for references. She had none. I told her I couldn't hire her without, and was goin' to turn her away when the missus, who was passin', called her to her and said: 'You don't seem strong enough for the work.' The gal said she only wanted a trial, and so, with that cryin' way of hers, she managed to git around the missus, and she engaged her. She's been a purty good gal, though. I'll say that for her. A little flighty, kinder forgetful, and so on, but a hard worker, and close mouthed."

"Yes, I found her so," muttered Treadwell.

"Did it never strike you that this girl was terribly out of place as a servant?" looking sharply at the clerk.

"Well, yes. It has struck me several times. She has a kinder way about her, different from any chambermaid I ever saw, and I've seen heaps of 'em."

"Her language is that of a lady, her bearing much the same. She cannot be much past sixteen years of age," continued the detective.

"I never asked her her age," remarked Seabrooke. "Women are kinder ticklish on that subject."

Treadwell smiled.

"You are right," he said. "How long has she been here?"

"'Bout four months, as near as I kin reckon. Stop a



minit. Let me see. No! She ain't been here that long. By gosh! she came here a couple of days after the two men in 47."

"Then that is about three months ago?" mused the detective aloud.

"Jist about."

"Did she appear to know either of the men?" cried Treadwell, eagerly, a faint suspicion that such might be the case entering his mind.

"No," replied Seabrooke. "An' the dumb man never showed that he knew her. She used ter go in an' make up the room. If they had ever seen each other before they would have showed it."

"More than likely," dismissing the thought from his mind. "She seems sick to-day," he continued. "She was burning up with fever when she left the room after the inquest."

"Well, she's had a purty hard time of it to-day," observed the clerk. "A good night's rest and she'll be all right in the mornin'. I'll give orders not to have her called to morrer mornin'. Let her sleep an' give her a chance."

"I think that would be the best plan," said Treadwell, rising and looking at his watch. "Nearly four o'clock. I'm much obliged to you, Seabrooke. Oh, by the way, you haven't a photograph of this man Allen in your possession?"

"No, sir. There may be one in his grip upstairs. I'll look and see, if you say so."

"No, at least I do not care particularly for it to-day. I shall probably be in to see you to-morrow. You had better put their belongings in shape and lock them up until further developments."

So saying the detective left the hotel.



“Why did Henry Allen take the life of his companion?” he muttered. “What reason could there have been for the act? Well, time alone can solve the mystery. I guess I’ll go get supper. I feel rather hungry.”



## CHAPTER VI.

## AN UNEXPECTED TURN OF AFFAIRS.

Our friend was a bachelor and, like others of his unfortunate (?) class, rented lodgings and took his meals wherever mealtime found him.

The particular restaurant toward which he was hurrying was a well-known and popular establishment on Baltimore street, and the detective knew a good meal awaited him there.

He was very hungry, having eaten an early breakfast, and lost his dinner, but he made up for it at supper. The meal he ate astonished even the hardened waiters, and, lighting a good cigar, he strolled out and stood near the curb, divided between an inclination to go home and to bed, and another to take in the theater.

The former gained ascendancy; so, pulling his hat down over his eyes, and taking a fresh hold on his cigar with his teeth, he started up Baltimore street at a lively gait.

His lodgings were on Broadway, not far from Baltimore street, quite a distance from the place where he had eaten supper, but he preferred walking to riding when he had plenty of time at his disposal, and so he started home on foot, not observing a figure emerging from the shadows of the doorway and noiselessly dogging his steps. A brisk walk of thirty minutes brought the detective to the corner of Baltimore street and Broadway. His cigar had gone out, and, in fact, was nearly smoked out, there being



but a short stump left, but it was a good one, and he wanted to get all from it that he possibly could. So, stepping into the shelter of a neighboring sign-board, he struck a match and prepared to relight it. Only one puff did he take, the stub fell from his lips, the match flickered and died out, the man stood and stared in amazement, for not three feet from where he stood, standing in the middle of the pavement, his face uncovered, his bright, piercing eyes fixed full upon the detective's face, stood a man—the exact fulfillment of the description given him by Alfred Seabrooke of Henry Allen, the very man he wanted—the murderer of Roger Deveau.

For an instant only did Daniel Treadwell stand transfixed with astonishment. The next he recovered his senses and taking one stride toward the silent, mysterious stranger, placed his hand upon his shoulder and said:

“You are Henry Allen!”

The strange one threw off the hand and, looking the detective full in the face, nodded his head affirmatively. Then, making a gesture toward the street lamp, upon the corner—but a few steps distant—he drew from his pocket a writing tablet and pencil, and signified that he wished to write something.

The officer led the way to the corner. Standing where the light of the gas could shine upon the tablet, the man wrote a few lines rapidly upon the paper and then handed it to the detective.

“Yes, I am Henry Allen. I have been following you. I must have a private interview with you,” the detective read.

A private interview! Here was a pretty turn of affairs. What could it mean? A moment's thought and the detective said:



"Very well, sir. My rooms are but a few steps from here. We will go to them. We shall be free from intrusion there."

The bright eyes of the mute glistened. He nodded his head in a satisfied manner, and motioned for the officer to proceed.

A short walk of perhaps three minutes and the two men reached the detective's lodging. The gas was burning in the hall way at the foot of the stairs, and, allowing the prisoner (for virtually he was such) to precede him, the detective made the way to his apartments, which were on the first floor above. Unlocking and opening the door, the officer ushered his strange companion into the first room, used by him as a sitting-room. The gas was not burning, but it did not take long to ignite a match and light it, and as the flood of gas illuminated the scene the detective gave a rapid glance at the face of the man who was supposed to be the guilty, blood-stained wretch who had but a few hours before foully murdered his friend and companion, and somehow that quick glance made the detective feel that the man before him could not have committed this deed. But he made no remark, only pushed forward a chair, upon which the white-haired man threw himself as if overcome by fatigue, and then, occupying another, waited to have the mute begin.

While waiting, the officer furtively studied the face before him. A sternly handsome countenance, smooth-shaven and marked by lines of suffering; a close, thin-lipped mouth, the corners drawn as if by years of pain; the eyes blue—that bright blue seen sometimes in summer skies—keen, intelligent, thoughtful eyes that told the soul of the man, which took the place of tongue and speech; eyes that belied the murderous accusation under which their possessor was laboring.



Suddenly, without warning, the mute turned his head, crowned with a mass of hair, snow-white and glistening, and looked the detective in the eyes. The officer returned the gaze without flinching—it seemed as if each man were trying to read the other. Then, taking his pencil, the dumb man began writing. The pencil literally flew over the tablet. For several minutes he continued and then handed the paper to the detective.

This is what the officer read:

"I am Henry Allen. I have read the papers to-day. They say I killed Roger Deveaux, that for \$2,500 I took his life. You are Treadwell, the detective?"

"Yes, what you have written is true," replied the officer, returning the tablet.

Another quick, sweeping glance, and the mute wrote again.

"Very well. I have admitted that I am the man. You know that. I suppose that if it is proven that I committed this deed that I will be hung."

The detective, reading, nodded an affirmative.

"Or, if any one were to commit murder in this state, they would surely be hung?"

"Surely."

A moment's thought, a contraction of the forehead, a look of resolution in the eyes, then the written words:

"Then there is no use to try to evade the law. The scriptural doctrine is: 'An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth.' I confess I killed Roger Deveaux. I am your prisoner."

Reading the words, the detective uttered an exclamation of surprise. Could it be that this man of noble mien and soulful eyes could have really committed this deed? The evidence was against him, everything pointed to him



as the guilty one; he even confessed it. But that confession, strange and unusual, seemed to say: "This man is innocent; this confession is a lie."

But why should the man deliberately give himself up and confess to a deed he never committed? Why should he give himself up at all? It was unusual. The self-confessed murderer sat watching him. Suddenly he pulled the tablet to him and wrote:

"Why do you wonder? Does not the evidence go to prove me guilty? Do you not believe my confession to be the truth? You perhaps wonder why I have given myself up?"

"Do you not know that remorse eating at the heart makes the thought of death a welcome one, as a relief to the torture of the soul, as a joyous release from care and trouble, as a place of rest, broken into by no hideous, heart-rending remembrance? I say it again: I killed Roger Deveau. I, and I alone, am the murderer. He was my friend, my tongue, my only companion. Yet I killed him. You understand it. I killed him."

The vehemence of the statement caused cold chills to creep along the spinal column of the officer. It seemed so unearthly, but it must be true. This man must be the murderer beyond doubt.

"As you confess the crime, there is nothing left for me to do but to turn you over to the jailer," the detective said, a faint tinge of pity in his voice. "You have given yourself up; you will accompany me to the central station, where you will stay to-night. In the morning you will be transferred to the county jail, to remain there until your trial comes on."

The man gave evidence that he comprehended it all, knew what he could expect, and, rising from his chair,



stood in an attitude of eager expectancy, as if impatient to be off. Still the detective hesitated. The evident anxiety of the man to be put behind the bars seemed to him so strange, so unusual. Could it be remorse that had actuated this man of majestic mien, a man who looked less like a criminal than any one he had ever seen, to thus run his neck in the noose, to take upon himself a crime of which he was innocent? There came to his mind the strong evidence against him, the facts of the case sufficiently strong to warrant the coroner's jury in returning a verdict against this very man, who stood pale and resolute before him.

"What is coming over me?" he muttered. "A few hours ago I was laying plans to track this man, to bring him to the bar of justice, and now that he is here before me, at my mercy, my prisoner, I hesitate and feel that I am almost committing a crime in arresting him. What is this? What does it mean? What has worked this change?" A glance at the white hair, the gentle eyes, and the answer came to his heart. "It is that face," came the answer. "Those eyes, the true mirror of the soul of the man. His words written upon the paper may say 'I am guilty,' but the face answers and says: 'Innocent.'"

That was it. The pale, handsome suffering face.

With bowed head the officer considered. He would fain have told this man to go, free; he would at that moment have even assisted him in the escape; but the man did not desire to escape; he came to give himself up.

Looking up, Treadwell found the eyes of the other fixed upon him, a look of mute surprise in their expressive depths—surprise, faintly mingled with impatience.

The writing tablet was lying near his hand. He wrote a few lines and handed the paper to the officer.



"I am waiting. One would think to look in upon us that I was the officer, you the prisoner."

"By God! I almost feel that I am the criminal, and you the innocent man," burst from the detective's lips.

A look of tenderness came to the beautiful eyes. Taking the pencil, he wrote again:

"You pity me. That is all. My suffering face and white hair has stirred the tender chords of your manly heart. You should not pity me. I am not deserving of it. I am a murderer. No matter what my appearance may indicate, my tongue says to you on this paper I am a blood-stained wretch. Take me to prison."

The detective, reading, gave vent to a sigh, and prepared to conduct his prisoner to the station. Suddenly a thought came to his mind. Turning to the man, he asked: "Why did you not go to police headquarters and give yourself up? If you were so anxious to be arrested, why go to the trouble of following me?"

Again the pencil glided over the paper, the blue eyes flashing as the words formed themselves before the eyes of Daniel Treadwell.

"I am no common criminal to be taken by a common man. I have been and am still a gentleman. I look upon you as my equal—a man of brains and a gentleman. Is the answer sufficient?"

Treadwell grasped the strong white hand of the other and cried:

"Aptly put, and now let me tell you something. I shall conduct you to the prison you so earnestly desire, because you so desire, not because I think you guilty of this horrible crime; but I will not allow you to sacrifice yourself without an effort to save you. I am an officer of the law. I shall do my duty and give you over to the jailer, but again I am your friend and I shall work to save you."



A tear came to the eye of the other, and he shook his head sadly; then, writing a line, only turned and walked toward the door. The detective read the line, eight words only. These:

“If you are my friend, let me die!”

He said no more, but, turning down the gas, prepared to leave the room.

In an hour Henry Allen was confined behind prison bars.



## CHAPTER VII.

## "HE IS NOT GUILTY."

The morning papers gave a wild and thrilling account of the arrest of the "daring murderer, who had been secured—after a desperate struggle—by the well-known and able detective, Officer Daniel Treadwell, etc., etc." They had not heard the truth concerning the matter. So they drew upon their imaginations to supply the deficiency.

So, when Treadwell reported at headquarters the next morning he was warmly congratulated by the chief, who had read the papers, and supposed the account correct.

"A clever bit of work," he exclaimed. "You tracked him down in short order."

"I did nothing of the kind," retorted Treadwell. "The man followed me home and gave himself up. In fact, he insisted on being locked up. So I accommodated him. There is not one particle of credit due me." And in a few words he gave the facts to the chief.

"That is a different version of the affair," remarked the other. "The papers have it that you tracked him down and arrested him only after a severe struggle."

"The papers do not always get things right," replied Treadwell, "but I shall take the trouble to put the straight account in the evening edition. I don't want any credit for this job. I don't deserve it," and he was as good as his word, for the evening edition of the Sun stated that the account published in the morning was incorrect, that Mr.



Daniel Treadwell, the able detective, etc., had called and given the correct version, etc., etc. The worthy officer felt out of sorts all day. He read the corrected account of the arrest with satisfaction.

"I want things straight in this case," he muttered, throwing the paper aside, and then, hoping to throw off the feeling of melancholy, of dissatisfaction that had taken strange and unusual possession of his mind, he left the station and started toward home. But the change did him but little good. Arriving at his lodgings, he tried to read, but the face of dumb Henry Allen seemed to come between the pages of the book and his eyes. He could not drive this man from his mind, try as hard as he would. It seemed as though he could see his form occupying the chair opposite, which still remained in the same position as on the previous night. Finally he threw the book from him and walked into his bed-room. Throwing himself upon the bed he tried to sleep, and after pitching around for a while was successful. He slept until a succession of knocks upon the door of his sitting-room aroused him to consciousness, and, rubbing his eyes, half dazed and not wholly awake, he went to the door.

Throwing it open, he started back in surprise, for his visitor was a stranger and, to cap the climax, a female. Before he could recover from the surprise her presence caused him, the lady spoke, her voice sounding strange from behind the thick veil that shrouded her features, effectually concealing her identity.

"You are Mr. Treadwell?" came the muffled inquiry.

"I am," respectfully.

"Mr. Daniel Treadwell, the detective?"

"The same."

A faint sigh, as if of relief.



"I must see you, Mr. Treadwell, alone and at once. Pray pardon the boldness of my act, but, believe me, it is necessary." The voice, low and appealing, the hands half raised, as if in dumb supplication, caused the officer, a gentleman every inch of him, to step aside, leaving the doorway free for her to enter. With a quick glance over the left shoulder, as if to assure herself that she was not being followed, the unexpected visitor glided into the room. Closing the door behind her, and sinking into the chair, which Treadwell hastened to place at her disposal (the chair that Henry Allen had occupied the night before), she allowed her hands to fall idly into her lap, the gloved fingers nervously intertwining and twitching. Standing opposite—the table before him—between them—the detective patiently waited. He wished her to begin the conversation; but, although his tongue was silent, his brain was busy, busy in deep thought, conjectures as to the identity of this woman and the object of her visit.

Suddenly she aroused herself and raised her head.

"We are alone?" she murmured.

"Quite so," he replied.

"No one must overhear us," she continued, nervously.

"No ears but your own must hear my words."

Treadwell bowed.

"You need have no fear," he said assuringly.

"It must be so. No one but you must hear what I have to say," she repeated. "And, oh heaven, I pray that you will believe me and assist me," the tone appealing, the fingers working.

The detective bowed again. He scarcely knew how to reply.

The woman sat silent, as if studying how to begin. The shadows of the dying day crept in through the windows. Night was coming on.



"You doubtless think me strange. You are probably growing impatient," she murmured at last; "but, oh, you don't know how hard it is for me to begin."

"Take your time; there is no hurry; I have no pressing business," stammered Treadwell, at a loss what to say, but wishing to set her at ease.

"You are very kind," she said, gratefully. "I shall not detain you any longer than I can't help. I have come to ask your assistance. I must not longer conceal my face from your eyes. You shall see my features and, looking in my eyes, you will believe me. You will not then doubt me," rapidly speaking the words, at the same time removing the pins that held the veil in place.

"I assume this method of concealment to prevent recognition," she continued. "But I do not wish to hide my face from you. There! It is free," throwing aside the veil.

In the dusk of coming night the detective could see that the face, upturned to him, was that of a woman no longer young, but still bearing traces of a divine loveliness. Eyes black and soulful; hair, the ebon shade of a raven's wing; features, regular and clear-cut; a woman who at one time had been wonderfully beautiful. The veil thrown back from the brow showed the glossy hair, still untouched by the snows of time, and in the liquid eyes a look of eager appeal, of anxious expectancy.

"It is growing dark," he suggested, turning from the appealing glance. "I will light the gas."

She made no response. So, taking a match from the stand upon the table, he struck it upon the side of the receptacle and applied the flickering blaze to the gas burner.

The brilliancy of the light caused the woman to avert her eyes, turning the left cheek toward the detective and



revealing a long, narrow cicatrice running the full length of the face—a hideous scar, that marred the beauty of the woman. At that moment she turned her full face toward him, and again raised her eyes to his face. Now, with the light shining full upon her, the detective placed her age at about five and forty. Without further hesitancy she began, her voice low, but intense, her speaking eyes glowing and changing as the conflicting emotion of her soul dictated.

“I read in the morning papers that Henry Allen had been arrested by you after a severe struggle and placed in prison. In the evening edition I saw that you had corrected the account, that the man had given himself up, confessing to the crime, acknowledging himself as a murderer, a calculating assassin.” A ring of pain in the voice.

“It is true, madam.”

“Confessed himself guilty of as foul a deed as was ever perpetrated by man. Confessed he killed his friend. Oh, God! willingly acknowledged it?”

The words came in a wail, the ebon eyes showing the suffering of the woman.

“Quite true,” replied Treadwell, in a low, pitying tone.

“And he is now in prison?”

“I could not do otherwise than confine him. He wished it.”

She seemed not to hear him. Rising to her feet, she rapidly paced the room, wringing her hands, the dress of heavy silk swishing from the movement of her limbs.

Suddenly she ceased her rapid pace. With a mighty effort she controlled herself and, standing before the detective, said in a tone of overpowering conviction, her eyes upon his face:



"And yet he is innocent!"

Treadwell started; the words came so suddenly. He returned her gaze, his keen eyes striving to pierce her soul.

"Can you prove his innocence?" he asked, slowly, deliberately.

She turned from him, sinking into the chair behind her. The officer, his brain now working, the feeling of conviction that this woman knew something of the murder possessing him, came from behind the table and approached her.

"Can you prove his innocence?" he repeated, sternly now, all restraint gone, the sleuth hound of his nature urging him on.

"I cannot," she murmured, her voice breaking, her face hidden in her hands. "Would to God I could."

The answer created a feeling of surprise in the mind of the man.

"Yet you declare him innocent," he muttered. "What foundation have you for your assertion?"

He awaited the answer. It came:

"I know his kindly nature. I know he could not commit such a foul deed," still sobbing, the tears trickling from between the interlocked fingers.

The answer did not satisfy the man. He told her so.

"Your answer does not satisfy me," he said slowly. "From the tone of your voice, when you spoke the words 'He is innocent,' I believe that you can prove his innocence, but for some reason you will not. Is not this true?"

With a quick, nervous motion she dashed the tears from her eyes, and again looked him unflinchingly in the face. The action startled him.

"He was here last night?" she said quickly. "You saw him. You, as a student of human nature, could surely



read his character. After seeing him and looking into his eyes, do you believe him guilty?"

Treadwell lowered his eyes. The question went to his heart. At last, his gaze upon her again, he said:

"You have asked me a question. I will answer it honestly. No. I do not believe him guilty."

A faint smile of triumph curved the beautiful lips.

"Even in the face of his confession?" she persisted.

"Even in the face of his confession," he repeated.

She sprang to her feet.

"And you were convinced of this. Seeing him but once, knowing him but a few minutes, armed with proof that would hang him if brought before a jury, and you think it strange that I, who have known him for years, who have had evidence of his noble heart and generous disposition, should proclaim in convincing, positive tones his innocence?"

She stood before him, looking him through and through with her wonderful eyes. He bowed his head in thought.

"I have not as yet stated my errand," she continued, waiting a moment for him to reply. "I have taken up much of your time and have only succeeded in arousing suspicion in your mind. Ah, I know it. You need not deny it. Your action and tone tell it to me plainer than words. Dismiss that suspicion. It is unjust. Remember! You are a gentleman. Your kindly face tells me that you are just and true. I am but a woman, a woman who has suffered and caused suffering. I rely upon you to assist me in saving the life of a man who blindly seeks to throw away the precious boon. You can do it."

She paused as if for breath. Her words had gone to his heart.



"What do you seek to do?" he asked.

"To save Henry Allen from the scaffold," she replied.

He looked her in the face.

"I have already sworn to do that," he said, slowly, "and more, I have registered an oath to bring the guilty one to justice."

A faint shudder convulsed her.

"And do you rely upon that to prove the innocence of the self-accused man?" she asked.

"I do."

Her features grew hard.

"Then I cannot look to you for assistance," she said.

"What do you mean?" seizing her by the wrist.

"That you will never find the guilty one. Hear me, Mr. Treadwell! There is but one way by which Henry Allen can be saved. Do not ask me to explain my mysterious words if such they seem to you. I cannot make them plainer. Let it suffice that you and I believe this man innocent, and save him in spite of himself. While you are seeking the murderer this man will be placed on trial, and from the evidence given, convicted. He will not say one word to clear himself. He has gone to prison voluntarily. He wants to die. He must not die. We must save him."

He released her from the iron grip he had fastened upon her wrist, unconsciously. The last words of the man came to him: "If you are my friend, let me die," and now this woman repeated the words, asserted that he wished to die. What mystery was here? What could it mean? The feeling of suspicion that had formed in his mind against the woman returned with increased force, but he must not let her see it; he must sound her, force from her in some way the knowledge she possessed. Yes, he would free Henry



Allen, but by proving that he did not murder Roger Deveaux, and the only way to prove that was to find out who did. In a cold, hard voice, which he could not force into kindness, he said:

"I have been considering your words and actions, which, you must admit, are strange, and justify me in my suspicions, which you have so closely read. In order to assist you, I must first know your plan. If I agree to help you I will do all in my power to forward your scheme. If I do not agree I shall keep your words locked in my breast. No one shall know of your visit here—no one have the faintest suspicion that I have ever met you, no matter where and when we next meet. I pledge you my word of honor to this, and even detective officers have honor. Now tell me your plan."



## CHAPTER VIII.

## A STARTLING PROPOSITION AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

The woman seized the detective's hand.

"I know I can trust you," she cried, eagerly. "I have not been mistaken in my estimation of your character. Before I unfold to you my plan (and believe me it is the only one that can prove successful) shall I tell you why I came here to you?"

"If you choose."

"I will. When I read in the evening edition of the Sun that you had gone to the trouble of correcting an account which gave you much credit as an officer and substituted one that gave you no credit whatever, when I saw that you willingly renounced glory for truth, I concluded that you were a just man, and a just man is ever true. I felt then that I could trust you, although I was not sure that I could prevail upon you to assist me."

The officer bowed.

"Now for my plan. We must remove Henry Allen from the prison where he is now confined."

This startling proposition caused our friend to give utterance to a gasp of astonishment.

"Assist him to escape?" he cried.

"No; not that. He would not willingly leave that prison to which he has voluntarily gone. He would not step one foot outside its walls, even if the doors were thrown open."



"What do you mean, then?" staring at her in amazement.

"We must remove him against his will, without his knowledge."

His brows contracted impatiently.

"What you propose is impossible," he said.

"No; it is possible, but difficult to carry out. I understand the difficulties, but can overcome them with your assistance."

"Will you kindly enlighten me? Believe me. I shall feel pleased to know how you propose to take a man from a prison cell without his knowledge, not to mention the fact that there are other slight obstacles, such as turn-keys, guards, and so on. Then again, the prison walls are thick."

He spoke sarcastically; she noticed it.

"I have thought of all these things and provided for them," she said, her bright eyes upon his face. "You seem to doubt me?"

"I do not think that strange," he replied, smiling in spite of himself.

"You do not think I would suggest this thing unless there was a prospect of carrying it out," she hastened to say. "I will admit it is not usual; the plan is a daring one, but it can be made successful."

"How?" feeling slightly nettled at her persistence.

"Do you know the location of Henry Allen's cell?" earnestly.

"I do not."

"I do. I have investigated so far. I have been to the prison, ostensibly to visit the institution, but really to ascertain the exact location of his cell."

"Well?"



"He is in cell 92, in the rear of the prison. His window overlooks the street which runs along back of the prison and is a wide one."

"The street?"

"No; the window. There is no wall at the back of the prison."

"I know that," becoming interested.

"My plan is to gain admittance to Henry Allen's cell, administer an anaesthetic, cut away the bars and netting that secure the window, then lower his insensible body through the aperture to the street. A close carriage, a swift horse and the deed is done."

A feeling of admiration for this daring woman came to the mind of the detective. The scheme was practicable, but dangerous.

"Your plan is a daring one," he said.

"But not impossible to carry out?" she cried eagerly.

He considered a moment.

"No," he replied slowly, then, his eyes fixed upon her face: "I will admit that all you have proposed might be carried out, but there is one thing you have not mentioned. If Henry Allen gave himself up once, would he not do so again, upon returning to consciousness?"

A peculiar smile came to the woman's lips.

"No," she said. "I have taken everything into consideration."

"You could keep him out of prison if you succeeded in getting him out?"

"I could keep him from returning voluntarily."

"How?"

She looked at him appealingly.

"Do not ask me to explain," she murmured. "Believe me, I cannot go farther."



He frowned slightly.

"I must confess myself puzzled," he said. "I take from your words that once out of prison (where he has willingly gone) you can, by the exercise of some power, restrain him from returning. If you have that power, why can you not, by visiting him in his prison cell, prevail upon him to tell the truth and free himself without all this trouble?"

She turned from him, a weary sigh welling up from her heart. In a suppressed tone she said:

"Your reasoning, Mr. Treadwell, although simple enough to your mind, is that of a man who does not know. If Henry Allen could have spoken the truth, do you suppose he would have gone to prison at all? Would he be there now? I have given you the only way by which he can be saved. Believe me, it is so. Will you help me?"

He saw that it was useless to press her upon this subject; so, adopting another tack, he said:

"One thing more. I will refrain from touching upon this point that appears to cause you pain, but there is one other and the most serious of the many obstacles in the path of the successful fulfillment of your ingenious scheme. The fact that Henry Allen was no longer in confinement would be known in a short time, and the blood hounds of the law would be let loose upon his track. He would be recaptured and returned to the prison. Have you thought of that?"

"Naturally," she replied, wearily; "but if you assist me in carrying out the first part of my plan you could surely render me aid in that particular."

"How?"

"As one of the keenest detectives upon the force, you would doubtless be put upon the case. It would be a comparatively easy matter to follow a wrong clew for a few



days. Give me one week, and I can defy your entire police force."

Her tone bespoke conviction and determination.

"And you ask me to do this?" he said, reproachfully. "Do you remember my words of a short time since: 'Even a detective has honor?'"

She flushed slightly.

"The life of an innocent man should appeal to your sense of honor," she replied.

"You are strangely inconsistent," he cried, somewhat peevishly. "You come to me, an officer of the law, sworn to do my duty, and ask me to assist in an act in open violation of my oath and honor. You depend upon that same honor to keep your secret; you refuse to take me into your confidence, and expect me to act blindly, having full faith in you—an entire stranger, whose object even in carrying out this unparalleled act of daring is unknown to me. Consider, is it not asking too much?"

Tears came to the soft eyes.

"Your words pain me, Mr. Treadwell. They are severe, although probably not meant to be so. I admit the truth of them, however. It is asking too much. To a man in your position the discovery of such an act on your part would mean disgrace and, perhaps, punishment. I have considered all this. One thing, however, I have not told you. I have reserved it for the last. Pray heaven it may influence you, even to forgetting your oath of office."

"I am waiting."

"By releasing Henry Allen you will get at the truth of the death of Roger Deveau!"

He gave utterance to a cry of satisfaction.

"Then you admit that you know something about this affair?" making one step toward her. She drew back, shrinking from him.



"I did not say so," she murmured in a frightened tone.

"Your words, your actions say so," he went on rapidly. "A short time since you said in answer to my question, 'Can you prove the innocence of Henry Allen?' 'I cannot.' Now you say that if the man is released from prison that the true facts will be made known. Who will reveal them? Surely not Henry Allen. He has gone to prison—taken upon himself the crime to conceal them. I believe this. You know it. How, then, can the true facts be shown? Who will state them—you? If so, you have lied to me. You do know who killed Roger Deveaux."

She fell from the chair upon her knees before him, sobbing, trembling, words failing her in her torrent of tears.

They affected the stern man not one particle. He looked upon them as tears of fear, not of sorrow, nor contrition. Rapidly he revolved the facts of the case in his mind. Standing over her, the gas shining upon his stern-set face, the bright flood reflecting the jet-black radiance of the woman's beautiful hair, there passed in review before his mind's eye all that had come to his knowledge. An innocent man (as he believed him to be, as the woman claimed) had given himself up to justice as an assassin. Why had he done this? To shield another? No other reason could he now assign for the strange action. But who? Like a thunderbolt from on high came the answer. This woman before him! He almost staggered as this came to him in a flood of overpowering conviction. His mind, now busy, skilled in forming theories, went back to the testimony given at the inquest by the saloon-keeper, the words of Alfred Seabrooke. Henry Allen had sent money to a woman, this woman presumably his mistress. All men are human, all men have passion. Why not Henry Allen? The friend and companion, Roger Deveaux, knew of this



fact; he had been heard to rate his companion for this extravagance; they had quarreled on this score. It was the only point of difference between them. The woman possibly knew of this, was aware of the dislike or aversion Roger Deveau felt for her, feared that he might in time separate her lover from herself. Through this blind man she might lose her lover. In her desperation she resolved to put this enemy out of her path, silence his tongue forever. Fertile in schemes (she had proven it), she found a way to enter the hotel unperceived. It could easily be accomplished. Between the hours of five and seven there was no clerk in the office. So she could easily have entered without being seen. She made her way to the room—room 47—and committed the deed. The corpse had been found lying near the bed. She had found him sleeping, therefore an easy victim. She had then rolled him from the bed, and moved the bedstead, so as to hide her crime. The noise occasioned by the falling body had aroused Allen, also sleeping, and he had found the woman he loved, the bloody razor in her hand, the guilty murderess of his friend. Through love for her he had given himself up to shield her from the inevitable results which must follow.

A divine love for an unworthy creature.

His companion dead, there was nothing left for him to live for, and so he craved death, to save her and end a life which was now blank and profitless. It must be true. All pointed to the woman as the guilty one in his rapidly formed theory. Then again came to him the strange actions of the girl Rachel; nervous, agitated, persisting in a pretence of ignorance, which he felt assured was assumed. She must know something of this and was probably attempting to shield this woman.



But why should she try to shield her, an entire stranger? Perhaps she was not a stranger. The former life of the girl was shrouded in mystery—mystery as dense as the foul crime itself. Perhaps she had known her, possibly had assisted in the crime! Yes, it all seemed plain, and now the woman, overcome with remorse, had determined to save her lover, if such could be done without criminating herself. Relying upon her speaking eyes, raven locks, and tears to move him, she had determined upon a bold step. She would make of him a tool to work out her plan. He, a detective, a man of perspicuity and intelligence! A bitter smile came to his lips as this thought came to him. He could have laughed in contempt and derision. Of course, she could not speak. She would condemn herself by so doing.

Her lover once out of prison, she could keep him insensible until far from the possibility of immediate pursuit, and could then laugh at the police force of Baltimore and himself. She had said as much.

But he would thwart her. She was in his power. Before the light of another day she would be behind prison bars!

But a change came over the even tenor of his thoughts. The man Allen had confessed to this murder. He was already in durance, awaiting trial. Even by arresting the woman he doubted if he could be brought to tell the truth. But might not she, seeing that it was hopeless to expect to free her lover by any other means, speak out and tell all? It might be, but to the mind of the detective seemed highly improbable. Henry Allen would surely hang, unless he, Daniel Treadwell, could prove his new found theory to be correct—prove beyond doubt that this woman was the guilty one. This could be the more read-



ily accomplished with the woman at liberty, under his constant surveillance. He could watch her closely, find out if there was anything between Rachel Adler and herself. No; he would not arrest her. She should go free. But from that hour he would be upon her track, her every action should be known to him.

For fully five minutes he had been occupied with his thoughts. Now that he had resolved upon a course of action, he fixed his eyes upon the woman and found that she had risen to her feet and was watching him.

"Then you will not assist me?" she asked faintly, in a low, frightened tone.

"I hardly expected that question from you, after what has passed," he replied in a hard, cold voice, his eyes fixed sternly upon her face.

She shrank from him, a hopeless look of despair in her eyes.

"Then I cannot appeal to you?"

He turned from her, making two strides toward the door, then returning.

"Appeal to your conscience, madam!" he cried. "You ask me to assist you at the sacrifice of honor and integrity, when, by telling the truth, revealing what you know, you can accomplish the result—that of setting this man at liberty, free from the stain of a hideous crime."

She clasped her hands in anguish, seemed about to speak, but checked herself and then began slowly to secure the disfiguring but concealing veil.

Suddenly she burst forth, her words rapid and intense, thrilling him in spite of himself.

"You ask me to speak. I have told you I cannot. I have spoken truly. You ask me in contempt, doubt and unbelief, your mind burdened with suspicion. Why? Be-



cause I wish to save the life of Henry Allen! It is not alone to save him from the gallows that I came here to beseech your aid. No, not that; but to save his life. Disgrace kills as surely as the hangman's noose, and the truth spoken by me, made known to the world and proclaimed throughout the land, although it would save this man from the gallows, would surely end his life. I cannot say more. I have appealed to you. You have refused me. Be it so! I have tried and failed, but I shall not give up," the words uttered fiercely. "I shall save him yet and the secret shall never be known."

He smiled incredulously.

"You forget that I am a detective officer," he said meaningly.

She had made a few steps toward the door. Hearing his words, she turned, the bright light of defiance in her eyes.

"I have not forgotten anything," she almost hissed. "Mr. Daniel Treadwell, I defy you to discover anything or thwart my plans."

He recoiled slightly.

"You have forgotten one thing," he retorted harshly. "I know your plans. You have given me cause to suspect you."

She smiled contemptuously, but replied quietly, a hard, metallic ring in her voice:

"I have not forgotten your words twice repeated," she said, and then mockingly: "Even a detective has honor."

The door opened and she was gone.



## CHAPTER IX.

## TREADWELL REVISITS BROWN'S HOTEL.

For an instant he stood dazed, his own words thrown back at him, her sudden exit, depriving him of the power to act for the moment; then, seizing his hat, which lay upon the table, he sprang to the door and down the stairs, in eager pursuit, determined to track her to her place of abode, realizing that he had found a foeman worthy of his steel.

"She is a clever one," he muttered, closing the hall door, "quick wited, determined and fertile of resource. By gad, how she glared upon me when uttering her words of defiance!"

Reaching the street he looked rapidly in each direction, up and down Broadway, but no female figure met his gaze. She had disappeared from sight. With hurried footsteps he made his way to the corner of Baltimore street, again to find himself baffled. A few pedestrians were passing either way, but among them no females.

She must have made rapid progress thus to disappear in so short a space of time.

Glancing across the street, he saw the faint glitter of a policeman's badge in the light of the street lamp.

"It is Maloney, the patrolman on this beat," he muttered. "Perhaps he has seen her."

With a faint hope that such might be the case he hur-



ried to the spot where the officer was standing, idly swinging his night stick.

"An' is it you, Mr. Treadwell?" the Irish policeman exclaimed as our friend reached his side.

"Have you seen a woman, closely veiled, pass this point during the last ten minutes?" he eagerly inquired, without preamble.

"Durin' the last tin minutes?" repeated Maloney, staring at the lamp post. "I don't think I have, Mr. Treadwell, nor in the last twinty minutes ather. I've bin here that long waitin' for the sargent."

"You are sure?" impressively.

"Sure an' I am. There ain't bin no woman pass me at all. Lave me alone fer watchin' out fer the famales, Mr. Treadwell," with a sly wink.

Baffled and chagrined, the detective turned away. The woman had successfully eluded him.

Where could she have gone? Surely not down Broadway, or he would have seen her. She could not have taken a carriage; he would have heard the sound of the wheels. Again he muttered: "She is a clever one," and recrossed the street. The clock in a neighboring church steeple chimed the hour of nine as he reached the opposite side.

"Nine o'clock!" he cried involuntarily. "I had no idea it was so late, and now that I come to think of it, I have had no supper. By gad, I never thought of it! Now, what is the best thing to do? This clever woman has managed to throw the dust completely in my eyes. I have not the slightest idea where she can have gone. I am hungry. Shall I attempt to trace her or go get something to eat? I guess the eating had better be attended to first, then the woman. A man can think better on a full stomach."

He turned and walked along Broadway to a restaurant



two blocks down. Giving his order for supper, he leaned back in his chair to think. Suddenly he sprang to his feet. A startling thought had entered his mind.

"Why did not that enter my mind before?" he growled, censuring himself. "The woman's disappearance can be easily explained. Thinking that I would immediately follow her, she, possessed of more common sense than I, took refuge in a doorway near by, and while I was questioning Maloney, she very quietly and easily slipped away. I must be losing my senses," resuming his seat. "No use going back to investigate now. She wouldn't be such a fool as to stay there an hour waiting for me to return and track her. I have made some of the most idiotic breaks during the past twenty-four hours; I could kick myself."

The meal he had ordered was at that moment placed before him. He ate slowly, reviewing his new found theory, in which the woman figured as the guilty one; while he did so, searching for the weak points. One point he had not settled to his entire satisfaction, and that was what had become of the money delivered to Roger Deveau from the firm in Owensboro, the express envelope which had been found with the razor clearly indicating that it had been taken by some one, and that one had bloody fingers, as the stains upon the crumpled paper plainly proved.

"The first idea that Henry Allen killed his friend for such a paltry sum as \$2,500 I now see to be ridiculous in the extreme," he pondered. "I doubt very much whether any intelligent jury would believe that after once looking upon the face of the man. Of course, that idea was the first one. The money was known to have been delivered and was not found in the room when carefully searched. The envelope gave silent evidence of the fact that the sum



had been taken from it. Now, who took it? The woman? I can't seem to see my way clear in that direction. From my estimation of this woman's character I believe her capable of committing murder, but not for money. No! no! She is not one of that kind. She would wade through rivers of blood for love's sweet sake, but not for money. Yet she must have needed it. Allen frequently sent her money, providing, of course, that this is the woman Allen ran the risk of displeasing his friend, to furnish with the needful. She must be. What other woman would so interest herself in him? She said she had known him for years, was well acquainted with his noble character and tender heart. Of course, she must be the woman. But did she take the money? Possibly. Seeing the envelope, with the money inside, she removed it, not for its value, but to make it appear that robbery had been the object. It might be that. If so, her reasoning was correct, for that was the first impression created. Any one would think that, unless, after careful consideration, they would see the utter fallacy of such an idea, as Deveau being blind, it would have been a comparatively easy matter to rob him without his knowledge, unless he kept the money upon his person, and even then a strong, determined man, coming upon him unawares, could surely have overpowered him and have taken the sum without resorting to murder. If the friend and companion Allen had designed such an act he could have done it while the other slept. No! The crime was not committed for the contents of that express package, that is sure. I must try to find that money. Whoever has that knows something about this affair, and it may be this woman, who I believe guilty, if not of the actual crime, at least of plotting for the life of this man. She might have hired an assassin



and paid him with the murdered man's money! But how could she have learned that this sum was delivered to him this particular day? Again the girl Rachel Adler comes to my mind as an accomplice. She might have known it, and informed the woman. Now that I come to think of it, there is a weak point in my theory. It hardly seems possible that this woman could have overpowered a powerful man like Roger Deveaux, unless she found him sleeping. She could then have easily committed the deed." His brows knit in perplexed thought, the knife and fork dropped from his hands with a clatter, his eyes became fixed upon the wall opposite. "The hired assassin idea also seems somewhat improbable, for, if Henry Allen, waking from his slumber, had seen a man in the room and his friend dead before him, he would have surely prevented the escape of such a man. Then again, he surely would not give himself up to shield a hired assassin. Of course, the deed could have been done, and the man gone before Allen awoke. Then, seeing the woman in the room alone, he might have thought her guilty, and so acted as he has done. That looks reasonable. The woman knows that he thinks her guilty. She fears to tell the truth, thinking, and rightly, too, that if the lover finds her guilty of plotting the murder, he, released from prison, would cast her off. She does not wish to lose him. She may not be guilty of the actual crime, but then again she is just as guilty if she planned it. I wish I could settle this matter to my own satisfaction. It grows deeper and deeper the more I think of it."

In a mechanical way he took up the knife and fork and silently finished his meal. Paying the amount due, he left the restaurant. Once upon the street again, his brain resumed its busy work.



"I cannot sleep to-night until I gain further knowledge concerning this affair," he muttered. "Let me see. First I will try to learn if Rachel Adler could have in any way known of the delivery of the money package. I would like to study her a little bit more. I will go to Brown's Hotel and question her again." Looking at his watch, he found the hour nearly ten o'clock.

"Rather late," he observed, walking briskly along. "But I shall probably have no difficulty in gaining my point. These hotels do not close early and the girl will doubtless be found awake."

In twenty minutes Treadwell entered the office of the hotel. He found it deserted, with the one exception of the night clerk, a middle-aged, sleepy-looking individual, with a bald head and wrinkled face. Years of night work had left their indelible trace upon his prematurely aged countenance.

"I would like to see Mr. Seabrooke," began Treadwell.

A look of preternatural solemnity came to the eyes of the wrinkled one.

"Mr. Seabrooke cannot be seen," he said, his voice in his throat.

"Is he in the house?"

"He is in the house."

"Then he will see me. I am Treadwell, the detective."

"It matters not, Mr. Treadwell. Mr. Seabrooke has given positive orders not to be awakened until the hour of five a. m."

"But see here. If you were to go to him and tell him that I wish to see him he will not refuse, depend on it."

"I cannot disobey orders," mumbled the antiquated.

The detective mentally cursed this strict adherent to rule and instruction.



"You say you are to call him at five?" he asked suddenly, an idea occurring to him.

"At five," came the response.

"I understood that Mr. Seabrooke usually slept until seven."

"That has been his custom."

"Why has he changed it?"

The sleepy looking individual looked annoyed.

"The sudden death of 47 has probably had something to do with it," he snapped.

"Oh, the murder of Roger Deveau?"

"Murder, then, if you will have it so. I prefer the other term," and the night clerk turned to a ponderous ledger, which lay upon the desk at his side, and began slowly to run up a long column of figures.

"So," muttered Treadwell; "Seabrooke has an idea that it would be better to have the office more carefully watched." Then to the man: "I don't wish to annoy you, my friend, but can you tell me whether it will be a possible thing to see Miss Rachel Adler to-night?"

The clerk turned his faded eyes upon him.

"Miss Rachel Adler, and who may she be?" he inquired.

Treadwell looked annoyed and answered impatiently: "The chambermaid on the third floor."

A look of horror came to the bleared eyes of the other.

"See a chambermaid at this hour? No, young man! Such a proceeding would be highly improper and in direct opposition to the rules of our establishment."

"Damn your establishment!" growled the detective. "See here. I have come here on business. I want to see Mr. Seabrooke. You give me the number of his room, and I'll take upon myself the responsibility of arousing him."

The bald one drew back in mild dismay. He could



scarcely control his voice sufficiently to speak. Finally he gasped out:

"Such a proceeding would be highly improper, not to mention the rage of Mr. Seabrooke, which would surely descend upon my head."

"It would be a sad thing for your head if it descended with much velocity," observed Treadwell. "There is so little to break the descent. But come, what is the number? If you don't choose to inform me, I'll rap on every door in the house until I find the right one. Then think of the united and concentrated rage of the boarders descending, et cetera."

The man started back and clapped his hand to his bald pate, as if to shield it from harm.

"Room 20," he gasped. "On the first floor to the right."

Treadwell waited to hear no more, but, smiling at the peculiarities of the night clerk, hurried up the stair case. Room 20 was easily found, and a few good raps upon the panels of the door brought the occupant, Alfred Seabrooke, arrayed in a long, white night gown, artistically embroidered in red, and a high, conical night cap, topped off with a tassel of the same hue as the embroidery, adorning his head.

"Mr. Treadwell!" he gasped in astonishment.

"Yes, it's me. I want to see you, Seabrooke. You retire early."

"I got up earlier this morning," moving aside and permitting the officer to enter the room.

"Came to the conclusion that it was a bad idea to leave the office without a clerk between five and seven, eh?" said the detective, taking a chair.

The day clerk and manager yawned prodigiously and replied:



"Well, yes. You see there is no tellin' who might come in or go out durin' them hours. We must look out that the boarders don't skip."

"Or see that another murder is not committed."

"Well, yes, that's about it."

"I want to ask you a question, Seabrooke. Who delivered that money package to Mr. Deveaux?"

The clerk, sitting upon the edge of the bed, considered a moment.

"Why, the express agent himself," he cried. "The book had to be signed, you know."

"Deveaux could not sign it; he was blind."

"I never thought of that. Let me see who did sign that book," his head thrown back, his peaked chin thrown forward. "Oh, yes. Why, Rachel Adler signed it. I remember the expressman mentioned it."

A cry of satisfaction from the officer.

"You are sure of this?" he interrogated.

"Yes, now that I am awake and can think, I'm sure of it. I remember I rang for Rachel to show the agent to the room, and she signed the book because Mr. Allen was not there at the time."

"Can I see this girl Rachel?"

"Not very well, unless you know where she is."

Treadwell sprang to his feet.

"What do you mean by that?" he cried.

"She left my house this mornin'."

A feeling of disappointment and anger swept over the detective.

"Didn't I instruct you to watch her?" he demanded.

"I believe you did," slowly responded Seabrooke, "but I can't make people do just as I want 'em to. The gal wasn't under arrest and I couldn't very well keep her from goin' if she wanted to quit."



"Have you any idea where she went?" impatiently pacing the floor.

"Not the slightest."

"Why didn't you follow her?"

"That ain't my business. I ain't no detective, and, besides, I ain't got no time to go follerin' people. I couldn't very well do it, nohow. She went away in a carriage, and I ain't much of a runner."

"A carriage!" The words burst from the detective. "Did she order a carriage? Come, man! tell me all you know about this."

"Well, I'll tell you all I know, and then I hope you'll go, so I can git some sleep. I ain't used ter bein' knocked out of bed this way, and it don't agree with me," speaking in an injured tone.

"Very well. I'll go just as soon as you tell me the facts."

"About ten o'clock this mornin', while I was in the office makin' out a few bills which come due to-day (and which I wanted to collect, as I don't think it's a good idea to let board bills run longer'n a week; they're harder to collect, you know), a hired hack drove up to the door and the driver came in an' told me somebody wanted to see me outside in the carriage. I thought it might be a new boarder. A good many of our boarders come in hacks, you know, an' so I dropped my pen an' went out. I found a lady in the hack."

"A lady!" cried Treadwell, interrupting him.

"Yes; a real lady, if I ever saw one. 'Have you a gal by the name of Rachel Adler workin' fer you?' she asked. I told her I had. 'I want to see her,' she said. Not wantin' to disoblige a lady, although it's dead agin our rules to have people visitin' the servants durin' business hours, I sent the porter to hunt up Rachel, and in a few minutes



she came downstairs, lookin' very white and sick. You know, she had a bad spell of it that night after the murder."

"Yes, I know she was sick when I left; but go on."

"She went out to the carriage, and got inter it. She must 'a' stayed there twenty minutes. The next thing I knowed she come inter the office and said in that gentle way of hers: 'Mr. Seabrooke, I'm goin' to leave you. I have got a better place offered me and I won't have to work so hard.' I felt kinder mad to have her quit me without notice—right in my busy time, too; but I didn't say so. 'All right,' I said, 'you kin go, if you want to.' She nodded her head an' went upstairs; the porter carried down her trunk (when she got it packed), the driver threw it up on his seat, and in a little while the gal come down an' got in the carriage. It went down High street at a fast rate an' that's the last I've seen of her."

For a moment the detective sat thinking over the man's words, then he asked:

"Do you remember the appearance of the woman?"

"Well, yes. She looked about forty; good-lookin', well dressed, an' had black hair and eyes."

"With a scar upon the side of her face along one cheek?"

"I believe she did, looked as if she'd been burnt at some time."

"The same."

The detective turned toward the door to hide the expression in his eyes. The girl did know the woman, then, his visitor of that night. They were acquainted, and the girl was now with her. So far, so good. He had learned what he came to know, and more.

"Thank you, Seabrooke," he said, turning to the man. "I will not keep you from your bed any longer," and he made a movement to turn the knob of the door.



"You're welcome," replied Seabrooke; then adding:  
"I see you've got Allen in jail."

"Yes; he gave himself up last night."

"Owned up to killin' the other?"

"Yes."

A thoughtful expression came to the man's face.

"Of course, that goes to prove he killed him," he said, slowly; "but do you know, Mr. Treadwell, if he hadn't owned up to it, I'd 'a' never believed him the one that killed Mr. Deveaux."

"But there was the razor and the bloody envelope. You heard the testimony?" wishing to try the man.

He slowly shook his head, the red tassel surmounting his night cap bobbing in a laughable manner.

"Yes, I know all that," he responded; "I know all that, but that razor, nor yet that envelope, don't go to prove that Mr. Allen ever done such a thing as murder. Why, if you'd 'a' known the man as well as I did, you'd never get such an idea in your head. What! Mr. Allen kill his poor blind friend for money? It looks too damned ridickerlous. But, then, he owned up to it an' that settles it."

"What do you think of Rachel Adler's statement?"

"I think she's a purty deep young woman."

"She declared she knew nothing of the facts of the case."

Seabrooke slowly crept into bed before replying. Composing himself finally, he said, with a prodigious yawn:

"Well, she might 'a' lied! Good-night, Mr. Treadwell."

"Good-night, Seabrooke."



## CHAPTER X.

## TREADWELL MAKES A DISCOVERY.

"She might 'a'-lied!"

The words rang in Treadwell's ears as he slowly descended the stairs. She might 'a'-lied! No doubt of it to his mind now. Here was another, a man, of no great perception, and he had conceived this idea. So the girl had left the house, and with the woman. He must find her, and by so doing discover the woman.

"I am getting forgetful," he muttered, halting half way down the stair case. "I forgot to ask Seabrooke the number of the hired hack. He said the hack was a hired one. How could I have overlooked it?" So saying he returned to number 20.

Tap-tap, on the door.

"Who's there?" came in a sleepy growl from within.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Seabrooke; but I neglected to ask you one very important question. What was the number of the hack the girl went away in?"

"I don't know. Didn't look. Ask the porter. Is that all?"

"Yes, that is all."

Ask the porter. Would he be able to find that sable functionary?

He found the wrinkled gentleman who filled the office of night clerk dozing over his voluminous ledger.



"I will be obliged to trouble you again, sir," said Treadwell, in a pleasant tone, arousing the dozing one.

The sleepy individual leveled a glance at him that seemed to say: "You here again? How long must I be subjected to your annoyance?" But his tongue mumbled out, in no very amiable tone:

"Well, what is it?"

"I should like to see the porter?"

"The porter! First you annoy me; then it is the chambermaid you must see; then the day clerk must be awakened from his slumbers; now it is the porter. Shall I awaken all the domestics, or, perhaps, you would like to have me send to Annapolis for the proprietress? Come, don't be bashful. If such is the case, say so. I haven't anything else to do but attend to your wishes."

The tone, half sarcastic, half petulant, caused our friend to smile.

"Don't lose your temper, my good sir," he remarked. "Perhaps all this is annoying to you; but remember, it is in the interests of justice that I do it."

"Justice, eh? Well, what do you want of the porter?"

"Simply to ask a question."

"More than one?"

"I cannot say positively, but I think not."

Without further remark the clerk turned and entered the little private room back of the office (the room where the detective had held his first interview with Seabrooke), and could be heard trying to arouse a seemingly very sound sleeper. Sundry grunts and gasps informed the officer that the sleeping one was returning to consciousness and in a short time the wrinkled clerk reappeared, followed by the drowsy porter, who was rubbing his tired eyes, not yet quite awake.



"It's you, sah?" he muttered, seeing the detective.

"Yes, I see you remember me. Do you remember the number of the hack that came for Rachel Adler this morning?"

"Don't recumembah it, sah, but I kin tell ye in a minit," diving down into the mysterious depths of a ragged coat. Presently he drew forth a torn and dirty memorandum book and began looking through its pages.

"Number 414," he said, finding what he was looking for.

"You are sure that is the right number?"

"Dead sure, sah."

"Why did you take down the number?"

"Policy, sah. I takes ebery number wot comes in a funny way. Ain't many hacks comes heah, and when dey does, I gits de number an' plays it. I done won three dolla's an' a quatah on Mister Deveaux's hack, sah, when he cum heah."

"You were fortunate," taking down the number. "Here is half a dollar for you," tendering the silver.

The negro took it, his eyes wide open now, his capacious mouth literally stretched from ear to ear, in a grin of delight.

"Done knowed it would bring me luck," he chuckled, stowing away the coin and returning to his interrupted slumbers.

"Good night, sir; I will not trouble you further," said Treadwell, bowing to the clerk and starting for the door.

"You have given me more trouble and less pay than any one in the house," replied that gentleman, significantly.

The detective laughed.

"I beg pardon," he said, taking a half dollar from his



pocket. "Will you accept this and with it my sincere apologies for causing you the trouble?" offering the coin.

The bald one took it, tested it with his teeth, and deposited it in his pantaloons pocket, where it fell with a dull, dead sound, conveying to the detective's mind the fact that it alone rested there.

"Trouble is nothing when one is paid for it," said the eccentric individual, with an air of preternatural wisdom. "Your apology, given with silver accompaniment, is accepted, sir. Good-night." Then turned to the ledger to soothe himself to rest.

Laughing, the detective left the hotel.

"I am in luck," he observed, heading toward Gay street. "It is rather late to hunt up hack 414, but I don't feel a particle like sleep; in fact, what I have learned to-night has made me feel decidedly wakeful. Like the little boy on the night before Christmas, 'I can hardly wait till morning.' So I will hunt up the important hack; perchance before to-morrow's light I shall learn something more."

Hunting a numbered hack is not a difficult matter, as the numbers and names of the owners of all public vehicles are registered in the city clerk's office, where the licenses for such are applied for; but at twelve o'clock at night it is not possible to obtain ingress to such records, and of this fact our friend was well aware. He relied upon finding the hack he sought by going to the several large stables, who made this particular branch of the livery business a specialty, and trusted to the good fortune that had attended him so far that night to bring about a successful issue. One of these stables was upon Gay street, not far from Holliday. To that one he went. Hack 414 did not belong there. It did not take long to find that out.



So, engaging a carriage and a well posted driver, he started upon his round of all the principal stables.

Three were visited without success, but the fourth one proved to be the one, for upon inquiry the glad tidings came in the form of a gruff answer from the lips of a bare-armed and rubber-booted carriage washer.

"Yes, No. 414 belongs here. What of it?"

"Where is the proprietor?"

"Home in bed, where I orter be."

"Who drove 414 to-day?"

"Mornin' or afternoon?"

"Morning."

"Bill Hitchem."

"Is he about?"

"He ain't far away. What do you want of him?"

Treadwell showed his badge.

"Oh, 'fly cop,' hey? You'll find Bill, pretty well loaded, in the saloon on the corner."

"Would you mind taking a drink yourself?"

"Try me! Washin' carriages is purty cold work, and a hot drink never comes amiss."

"I thought so. Here is a quarter. Go to the saloon and get your drink; bring Bill back with you."

"Yours truly," taking the quarter and hurrying toward the saloon.

In fifteen minutes he returned with "Bill" in tow, and there was no doubt in the mind of the detective that "Bill" was "loaded;" so much so and so heavily, in fact, that he staggered and reeled under it.

"He didn't want to come," remarked the carriage washer, depositing "Bill" upon a pile of blankets near; "but I persuaded him; I carried him."

"You have earned your quarter," said Treadwell; then, approaching the intoxicated driver, he asked:



"You drove a lady to Brown's hotel this morning about ten o'clock?"

"Brown'sh shotel? Lesh shee. Think I did. Yesh—lady—black hair. Yesh. Brown'sh shotel."

"Another lady got in your hack there."

"Guessh sho—yesh—young woman," dropping his chin on his breast.

"Where did you drive them?"

No response. The man was asleep. Shaking him by the shoulder, the officer aroused him from his drunken stupor.

"Whash a mazzer?" he growled, looking up, a dazed look in his bleary eyes.

"Where did you drive the woman and young lady from Brown's hotel this morning?"

A look, meant to be cunning, came to the drunkard's face.

"What'll you give t' know?" he gurgled.

"Not one cent," curtly replied Treadwell. "But let me tell you what you'll get, my friend, if you don't answer my question—three months in the county jail. I am a detective officer, on the track of a criminal, and I come to you for information."

The driver looked helplessly at the carriage washer.

"He's a 'fly cop,' Bill; you'd better 'squeal,'" advised that worthy, in a hoarse whisper.

"Fly copsh! I'll tell you, mishter. I drove 'em to Barnum's shotel."

"Is this the truth?" sternly.

"Honest, s'help me God!" with an air of drunken gravity and earnestness laughable to behold.

"For your sake I hope so," said Treadwell, restraining his laughter and returning to his hack.



"Here is a half dollar, my man," to the carriage washer. "When Bill wakes up in the morning he will want a drink. Get him one and treat yourself."

"I'll do it, sir," bowing, mentally adding, as Treadwell walked out of the stable: "A true gent, anyhow, even if he is a 'fly cop.' Then, going to Bill, he hustled him up from the blankets and put him to bed in an empty horse stall, upon a pile of straw not overly clean.

Meanwhile the detective was being driven toward the celebrated hostelry, where he was well known.

The night clerk, Mr. Bailey, was an intimate acquaintance, and to him Treadwell put the question if he knew of a woman answering the description given stopping there.

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Bailey. "You have described Mrs. Branscombe. She has been one of our guests for nearly three months."

Three months! Just the time Roger Deveau and Henry Allen had been stopping at Brown's hotel.

"She brought a young girl here to-day," continued Treadwell.

"I can't say as to that. I go to bed at nine. But stay. I guess you are right. Upton, the day clerk, mentioned something to that effect as I was going on duty to-night. Her niece, I believe, he said." Then, turning to the open register: "Yes; see, here is the name, 'Miss Rachel Branscombe, with Mrs. Branscombe, room 34.'"

"They occupy the same room?"

"Yes; what's in the wind, Tread?"

"I am not at liberty to inform you, old man. You know my profession," with a smile.

"Secret, eh? Well, I won't press you. Only, if it's anything on the order of hotel thief I'd like you to give me a pointer."



"Nothing on that order, Bailey. Your Mrs. Branscombe is not a thief."

"She seems very much a lady."

"There is no doubt of her being one."

A sigh of relief from the hotel man.

"Can I be of any assistance to you?" he asked.

Treadwell considered.

"You might be," he said at last.

"In what way? You have only to speak the word, you know."

"Put me in the room adjoining theirs."

A rapid glance at the register and the clerk replied:

"I can't do that. The room—number 32—is occupied. But stay," looking over the call book. "I can put you in after four o'clock. There is a call down for 32 at four. Early train for Washington."

"That will do."

"The room won't be made up."

"That don't make any difference. Give me 32 at four, and I'll be under everlasting obligations to you."

"All right."

A glance at the clock showed the hour to be 3:30. So, lighting a cigar, Treadwell strolled out upon the balcony, which overlooked the street, and smoked until the city hall clock struck four. Waiting for fifteen minutes longer, he returned to the office.

"You can go up," said Bailey.

"I won't register," remarked the detective, "and I might remind you that I don't wish it known that I am in the house."

"Of course, I understand that."

The porter showed the detective to room 32, a large room upon the third floor, overlooking the street, and with a communicating door leading to room 34.



"I am in luck," he muttered, noting this; then, removing his shoes noiselessly, sat down to await developments.

There was no transom over the door, and the key was in the lock on the other side; this Treadwell found upon investigation.

"They will probably not be stirring before six or seven," he muttered, rising to his feet after his examination of the key hole. "I'll catch a wink of sleep," and, throwing himself upon the bed, without removing his clothing, he soon drifted off into unconsciousness.

The sun was shining in at the window, full upon his face, when he returned to life and action again. The sound of voices in the adjoining room gave evidence that the ladies had not left the apartment. He looked at his watch—7:35.

"Breakfast time," he muttered, but with no desire to partake of that meal.

Applying his ear to the key-hole, he tried to hear the conversation which was being carried on by his fair neighbors; but the door being thick and, the key filling the aperture, he could not distinguish words, although he thought he could recognize the voices.

"No use trying to hear anything there," he muttered, standing erect. "My only hope is that they will go down to breakfast and leave the room. It won't take me long to get in there and look through things if they will give me a chance. But will the woman take the girl down with her? She's clever, and may not run the risk; but she made no attempt to conceal the place she brought the girl to. She drove direct from Brown's hotel here. She did not show much cleverness in that. But that was in the morning, before she visited me. She did not see the necessity of concealment then. She probably had not read the papers, did not know that Allen had given himself up. She



knew the girl had given her testimony against him; that was published in the evening papers of the previous day. So she went to the hotel and took the girl away so as to remove her from the possibility of further questioning. That is it. She will not take the girl down to breakfast with her. She will not run that risk. Very well. I'll be obliged to resort to chloroform. I have some with me. I dislike using it, but 'needs be where the devil drives,' and if Mrs. Branscombe leaves her niece in room 34 while she goes down to her breakfast, I shall be under the painful necessity of rendering her unconscious and consequently docile. If things are as I strongly suspect, this lady will not remain long in Baltimore with her niece, so-called. I should not be one bit surprised if they were packing up, getting things in readiness for a sudden start even now." Again he applied his ear to the key-hole. The confused sounds from the other room justified his suspicion. Even while he listened he heard the sound of a trunk lid being closed down.

"I'm right," he muttered. "I hope she'll take that girl down with her. I'd like to look through that trunk before she locks it. There may be others, too."

With nerves strung to their highest tension, he listened. At last a grateful sound reached his ears. It was that of the door leading from the other room into the hall opening. A few seconds and he heard it close, then lock, and then footsteps sounded in the hall. Opening the door of his own room slightly, he saw the form of the woman who had visited him the night before going along the hall toward the stairs leading to the dining-hall. She was alone!

A pang of disappointment struck his heart.

"She has not taken the girl," he muttered; then, taking



a deep, resolute breath, he silently transferred a vial of chloroform from a pocket case to the side pocket of his sack coat and placed his handkerchief in the same receptacle.

"It must be done," he muttered. Locking the door opening into the hall, he silently approached the other and fell upon his knees before it, his eye on a level with the key-hole. His movements, now quick and active, showed that he wished to improve every spare moment; each minute was precious. Drawing from his pocket a small instrument, something like a pair of tweezers, he inserted it carefully and silently into the key-hole, a quick turn of the hand and the key turned in the lock, the bolt shooting back with a clicking sound. To open the door was the work of an instant and Daniel Treadwell entered room 34.



## CHAPTER XI.

## WHAT HE DISCOVERED.

As the detective crossed the threshold a young girl, who had been sitting gazing mechanically out of the window, turned and sprang to her feet.

"The detective!" she gasped, her eyes filled with terror, trembling in every limb.

"The detective, Daniel Treadwell, Miss Rachel Adler," he repeated, quickly.

"What do you want?" she asked, in a dazed, frightened manner.

"I have no time to explain now," he said hurriedly. "I will tell you more when I have more time. Only, I must confess my surprise at seeing you here. I did not expect it."

A lie, but put out to draw her on. She made no reply, only continued to stare at him. Without wasting any more time the man began his work of investigation. A trunk stood near the door, its lid down, but not locked. Toward this trunk the detective made a step. He had come to the conclusion that if the girl made no outcry he would not use the chloroform; but as he stepped toward the trunk she sprang before him.

"What are you going to do?" she demanded, her gray eyes blazing.

"First I shall silence you," he muttered, springing upon her and seizing her wrists. A quick blow on the pocket



and the subtle odor of chloroform gave evidence that the vial had been broken. One faint scream went up from the girl, then a desperate struggle as the officer applied the saturated handkerchief to her nostrils. Gradually



the writhing limbs became inert and powerless, the gray eyes lost their fire and closed, a deep sigh and the girl was helpless. Laying her tenderly and gently upon the bed, the officer turned to the trunk again. It was the only



one in the room (the girl's trunk was not there, probably had not been brought up), and he gave vent to a sigh of relief as he realized his work would not be so difficult to perform. He raised the lid and began searching the tray—a woman's trunk, the tray provided with many receptacles for letters, papers, bonnets, etc., etc., each of which Treadwell rapidly searched. He was looking for the stolen money, half expecting to find it, but in this he was disappointed. There was no money in the tray of the trunk; no secret hiding place. Replacing the articles taken from the tray, he turned to the body of the trunk. Dresses, underwear, everything pertaining to a lady's wardrobe, but no money. He impatiently stuffed the wearing apparel into the trunk and closed the lid.

"Ah, the bed. I had nearly overlooked that," he cried. In an instant he had torn the covering from the bed; mattress and pillows were carefully examined. Suddenly came a cry of satisfaction. Under the bolster he found a package, carefully sealed in clean manilla paper—a moderately bulky package, but not of money.

Without stopping to break the seal, he tore off the paper and found a closely written manuscript before his eyes, a manuscript dated back three years and bearing these words at the top of the first page:

"The confession of Lorraine Herschel!"

Wondering who Lorraine Herschel could be, but coming to the conclusion that it must concern this woman, as it was so carefully sealed and placed under her head while sleeping, he thrust the manuscript beneath his coat and, after a quick examination of the bureau and dressing-case, left the room, the girl giving evidence by her labored breathing that before long she would return to consciousness.



Relocking the communicating door, Treadwell glanced rapidly over a few pages of the packet. A great cry of amazement escaped his lips as his eyes rested on some words written therein.

"By gad, this beats anything I ever heard tell of," he murmured in astonishment. "I should say this did concern this woman, and the man as well. A fortunate find, and if I mistake not, will effectually interfere with Mrs. Branscombe's sudden departure. She will not leave Baltimore until she recovers this, and that will not be until I have unraveled this mystery and solved the problem satisfactorily to myself."

Steps in the hall, approaching the door of room 34.

"She is returning," muttered Treadwell.

The quick, firm tread passed his door, and paused before the one adjoining. The sharp click of the key in the lock, then a muffled cry:

"My God! who has done this?" he heard the words. Then a scream, and the heart-rending exclamation:

"The packet! It is gone. All is lost. Disgrace! Ruin! Shame! Oh, God in heaven, who has done this?"

He waited to hear no more, but tightly clasping his find to his breast, made his way down the staircase to the ladies' entrance to the hotel, nor did he stop until he reached his lodgings. He had not as yet eaten breakfast; he had not thought of it. An overwhelming feeling of curiosity to become informed as to the secret the packet contained drove every other thought from his mind, and so, upon reaching his lodgings, he divested himself of coat and hat, and then locking the door opening upon the hall to insure himself against intrusion and consequent interruption, he spread the manuscript out upon the table before him and began the reading of it.



**BOOK II.**

## THE CONFESSION OF LORRAINE HERSCHEL.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE BEGINNING.

January 4, 18—.

For the first time in fourteen long years I take my pen to record the thought my brain dictates.

For fourteen years I have been as one dead. True, I have eaten and slept, seen and touched, heard and thought, but my tongue has been silent. Its power to articulate has departed forever. I am dumb!

Better for me, perhaps, if that same all-wise God, who took from me the power of speech, had at the same moment—the awful moment of my life—stricken me dead and lifeless. The years of anguish, of heart torture, of bitter sorrow and yearning for revenge, would have then been spared me, but He thought it best that I should live. No, not that—exist; and so through all these years I have suffered as, perhaps, no man ever suffered before; have carried in my bosom a heart, dully throbbing with life, but dead in feeling for my fellow man; alive only with the hope of vengeance.

I at one time registered an oath before heaven that never again should any of my kind know my thoughts.



I would be dead to the world, as all the world was dead to me. My sorrow, my bitterness against all living creatures, should be locked in my breast. Everlasting silence should be my plan in life, until (and the thought caused my blood to surge through my being like an overwhelming torrent of fire) I once again met her. She who caused all this. Woman—the curse of mankind. Yet, the greatest blessing, if such she chooses to be.

Then, and not till then, should my brain reassert its power—then I would let loose the torrent of my repressed thoughts, and, like the pent up stream suddenly released from its barriers, carry desolation—death—in its surging, devastating course.

God knows I had cause for this feeling. Was not she my curse? Did not she blast the happy hope of a life of peace and joy? She brought about all this. Silenced my tongue, turned my life current to gall and bitterness, my heart to stone. And yet—I loved her once. Loved? Nay, idolized her; forgot my Maker, and knelt before an idol of flesh; an idol, at last broken, crushed before my eyes, as was the golden calf before the Israelites by the angry hand of Moses. It was my punishment.

But it is all changed now. The heart once crushed now beats with glad life; still sore, sometimes heavy, but the heart of a man again. I have found of all the living creatures of earth one whom I can love, one whom I can trust. A man! A man with a tender heart, whose ears cannot drink in the tones of my voice, as that is silenced, but whose noble face turned upon me reflects the soul of a Christian, and whose low, sympathetic, soothing voice quells the angry spirit within me, and promises peace once more to a mind diseased. He cannot see me. He knows not whether I am



young or old, repulsive or attractive. My white hair, the mark of sorrow, is not strange to him, as it has been to others—the cause of comment, of rude expressions of wonder. He is blind! I am his eyes; he my tongue, my heart, my life. He has, like the dove sent out by Noah, brought the green sprig from a world, so long submerged in the waters of unbelief, of eager desire for retaliation; has brought the gladsome tidings of new life, and so, before consigning it with my bitter past to the grave of forgetfulness, which I have even now prepared, I will write my story, my life history, recalling each bright event of a happy existence, recording the black shadow that fell as a pall upon my heart, and blotted out the sunshine with its funereal blackness.

Then I will forget! I have almost forgiven. All desire for vengeance has left me. God has made us as we are, born with passions that we cannot control. Perchance she was not to blame. I can say it now. “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,” and to His hands I consign her, blotting her from the pages of memory, casting her from me as I do the old life, beginning a new one, unmarked by the remembrances of a hideous drama, with the sunshine of bright promise casting its effulgent rays upon my pathway!



## CHAPTER XIII.

## BROTHERS.

We were half brothers, Ralph and I; I, ten years the eldest. My father (whose name I bear), Lorraine Herschel, died when I was little more than an infant. Three short years had passed o'er my head, years of which I know but little. I have no recollection of him, but his picture, hung over the mantel in the parlor, showed a man of handsome face and tender, loving eyes. "One of Nature's noblemen," my mother often said. And yet, in five years' time, she had forgotten him, and taken to herself a second husband, Clifford Dean.

I never liked Mr. Dean. He was cold, harsh, and stern, and I do not think he treated my mother kindly. From a rosy-faced, contented woman, she became thin, and a look of melancholy, so strange to me, came to her loving eyes, so I did not grieve when he was brought home a crushed, bleeding mass, killed in a railroad accident. I was at that time nearly ten years of age.

Two months after the horrible death of my stepfather, my mother gave birth to my half brother, Mr. Dean's child, whom she named Ralph, after one of my uncles, her brother.

I remember feeling somewhat put out that another had come to share my mother's love, but as the infant grew older, and developed from a puny, whining, fretful baby into a chubby-faced, bright-eyed boy, I became greatly attach-



ed to him, and thought myself extremely fortunate that a playfellow had been provided for me. It was I who taught him to walk, I to whom he addressed his first lisping baby syllable, and of these things I felt divinely proud.

What times we had! What days of pleasure, romping in the new mown hay in harvest time, gathering cherries, apples or nuts, in their seasons. He reached the age of five; I was fifteen.

Then my dear mother died and we were alone in the world. I shall never forget the sorrow that filled my heart when the family physician, turning to me, as I stood by her bedside, said in a low, solemn tone:

"Kiss your mother, Lorraine. It will be for the last time on earth."

I burst into boyish tears. The thought that soon my darling parent would be but a lifeless corpse nearly drove me frantic with sorrow.

I leaned over the precious form and pressed a kiss upon her lips. She opened her eyes, a dreamy, far off look in their faded depths. "Your baby brother Ralph. Lift him up so that I may kiss him," she whispered faintly. I did as she asked. He (poor little fellow) could not quite understand it all. He was too young to realize the loss we were about to suffer.

With her expiring strength she strained him to her bosom. "My darling," she murmured, kissing him; "my sweet baby." Then, her breath failing fast, her eyelids beginning to flutter as the cold fingers of Death pressed them to, she turned to me and said:

"Always—love—him—Lorraine. Keep him from evil."

"I will—I will," I sobbed.

Those were her last words.

So died our mother.



How often during those bitter years that followed have I thought of her words. I tried to do my duty, God knows, but mankind is weak, and the strongest sometimes go astray from the path of rectitude.

We buried her in the village churchyard, and the day following the funeral went to live with an uncle, that brother, whose name my mother had given her youngest born, coming for us, and taking us with him to his home, many miles away from the spot where our mother lay sleeping her last sleep, beneath the shade of a black oak tree.

Our uncle was unmarried, his household affairs being conducted by a widow whose husband had left her mourning but a few years before. She was a good woman, but weak-minded, her whole soul centered in a bright and winning child, the only inheritance her husband had bestowed upon her—a girl, Ethel by name.

The widow's name was Ethel Ronclere, the child's the same. She was but five years of age when we came to live with our uncle, but a bright, precocious child, and we two soon grew to love her with a brotherly affection. We called her sister, and I felt for her an elder brother's love.

She shared our boyish pleasures, and our secrets. We kept nothing hidden from each other, and happy—the years following blunting the keen edge of our sorrow over our loss—the days passed away.

I was eighteen, my brother and Ethel eight, when my uncle, calling me to his library one day, said:

“Lorraine, you are now of an age when it becomes necessary that you should begin to form some plans for the future. You have attended school here regularly, and your teacher tells me that you are in possession of all the knowledge that he can impart; that you should be sent to a high-



er institution. It is my desire to do my duty toward you as my sister's child, and so I have been in correspondence for some time past with the faculty of the college at New Brunswick, New Jersey—Rutgers College. I wish you to have a thorough, complete education, so that you will be prepared to combat with the busy world when called upon to do so. The term begins in September, and you will enter upon your collegiate course at that time. While there make the most of your opportunities. Thieves can rob you of wealth, but they cannot break into the treasure-house of the brain and deprive you of that which is stored there. Upon leaving college we will decide upon your future life. It may be that your mind will assist us in that, even while you are there. Think well of it, and what business or profession meets your choice I shall provide means to establish you in."

I thanked my kind uncle, and left the room. I found my brother and Ethel in the garden back of the house. I told them what he had said.

The tears came to the eyes of both. "You are going away from us," sobbed Ethel. Ralph clung to my hand.

I soothed them, telling them it would only be for a short time; that it was for my good; would make me a smart man, etc., and soon they dried their tears, and we strolled together through the fields hand in hand, I, although much their senior, feeling every particle as much a child as they.

Few young men of my age were as little posted in the ways of the world as I—I had never visited a large city; had never had any companion of my own age whom I cared to associate with. My brother and the girl, the only beings I really loved, not excepting my uncle, for whom I had a feeling of great respect, almost akin to awe, but not of love.



And so I enjoyed the childish pleasures we indulged in, and was happy and contented. Would that my happy life had ended there, among the green fields and flowers; then I would never have known the false world, of which I never dreamed then; would have gone to meet my mother as pure and unsullied as when she pressed her dying lips upon my brow.

September came, the days of childhood were over, and leaving the companions I so dearly loved, weeping childish tears at the thought of losing me, I accompanied my relative to the college, where the next four years of my life were to be spent.

"Work hard, my boy. Stick to your books, and avoid trifling, and you'll make your mark in the world," were my uncle's parting words. God bless him, reserved and cold, his early life blasted by a woman's faithlessness, but a noble man. Would there were more like him. I obeyed him. Although temptations strewed my path, alluring prospects of illicit pleasure held up before my mind's eye, yet I shunned them all, and soon earned for myself the sobriquet of "The preacher" among my gay companions. But I did not heed their jeers. I was working and delving for the treasures of knowledge, and I secured them. At the expiration of four years I graduated with the highest honors, while some of my wild associates failed to secure the diploma for which they yearned, but were too careless and thoughtless, or, I might say, lazy to work for. Midnight rioting and dissipation and study do not agree, as many of my companions found to their dismay and chagrin. During my collegiate course I had been home several times. Each time I met with a warm welcome, my brother and Ethel almost smothering me in kisses. How they loved me then. Ah, me! A bitter pang reaches my heart, as I



think of it all now. Why cannot we always remain children, in heart at least?

I could see that Ethel was growing very beautiful. Her eyes, black as midnight, began to give evidence of a woman's soul; her childish form showed signs of early and magnificent development. "A noble woman she will be," I one day thought, my eyes upon her.

My brother also grew in strength and beauty. He was ever a manly boy, and at the age of twelve looked fifteen, the very picture of health, his gray eyes glowing, his curly brown hair falling in ringlets to his collar. My uncle would not have his beautiful hair cut. "It would detract from his appearance," he said, and so, even to manhood, Ralph wore his hair much longer than was the usual custom. But it did not appear out of place; there was nothing "outré" in the long curling ringlets.

Graduating, I returned to my uncle's house, a man now, feeling my strength.

"You have done nobly," my relative cried, warmly, as we sat together that night in the library, he smoking, I lounging in an easy chair. I never used tobacco.

"I remembered your words," I replied, the warm flush of gratified pride mounting to my cheeks. "I would be unworthy of your generosity if I failed to make an honorable name."

He grasped my hand and shook it warmly; then for an hour I related to him many of my college experiences.

"So they called you 'preacher,' eh?" he cried, as I mentioned that circumstance.

"Yes, but the word, meant as a taunt, did not produce any feeling of anger in my breast; indeed, I felt proud of it."

"Did you, my boy?" then thoughtfully, as if in response



to a question which had arisen in his mind, "it is a noble calling."

"I have thought so," I said, knowing to what he had reference.

"You have?" fixing his eyes upon me.

"Often."

"Would you fancy the life of a minister of the gospel?"

"What life more noble, where greater chances to benefit mankind, where larger field for good work?" I know I spoke eagerly, enthusiastically.

"You would consecrate your life to the service of God?"

"And man," I added.

He rose from the chair where he had been sitting, and clasped my hand in his own, for the second time.

"And this is your choice?" he asked.

"If it pleases you, uncle," I replied.

He looked me in the eye.

"Please yourself, my boy. Nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to have you make this selection. But I would not in any way strive to influence you. What you become in the future you must choose and make yourself. You are a man now; a man with a mind overflowing with worldly knowledge. If your heart is filled with the grace of God, that with your knowledge will make you a shining light in the noble calling you have evinced an inclination for. But, my dear boy, if you are not sure of yourself, do not hasten. One false step may ruin the good work of years. Think well, then decide."

"I have thought," I cried; "I have decided."

"Then God be with you, and may your mother's angel spirit watch over you."

He released my hand, and in a short time we retired for the night; not, however, before I had had a long talk with my loved ones, and kissed them both.



A good-night kiss, the kiss of a brother, but as my lips pressed the red mouth of Ethel, a different feeling for her seemed to possess me. A strange feeling. I had never experienced it before.

It was the beginning of the end.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## THAT OTHER LOVE.

I took my theological course, was ordained and installed as pastor of a little country church about twenty miles from the village where my uncle lived. I was yet a young man, not quite nine and twenty, when I preached my maiden sermon, and it all comes to me now—the little old-fashioned church and its oaken rafters, browned by time, the congregation of simple country people, staring at the new minister, my uncle's eyes fixed gravely and expectantly upon my face (he had driven the twenty miles to hear my first sermon), and the awed faces of Ralph and Ethel, who, occupying pews near the pulpit, could see the very expression of my eyes, and doubtless perceived my very evident nervousness.

They were then nineteen. She, a woman now, realizing beyond my fondest expectations the perfect embodiment of perfect womanhood. How entrancingly lovely she was. I understood that strange feeling now that had permeated my entire being that night seven years before, when I had kissed her good-night. It was the first consciousness that I was in love. The first bright ray of that other love, which is greater than that of a brother—the love of man for woman. She was but a child then, but the feeling just bursting from its slumbers then now bloomed forth a radiant flower, that gladdened my heart—brought joy to my soul.



Yes, I loved Ethel Ronclere; and she—I felt that she returned it.

Standing in the pulpit, nervously scanning my notes, my eyes fell upon my brother. A man in all but years; the down of the first incipient mustache darkening his lip; the shoulders, broad and square set, giving evidence of great strength; the curling locks furnishing an added beauty almost unearthly to the handsome face. A great feeling of love for that brother welled up from my heart. How noble he looked—a brother to be proud of. I gave out my text. The words of the Saviour to the angry waters: "Peace, be still," and proceeded with my sermon. Slightly nervous at first, I, warming to my work, overcame the feeling. I told them of the Savior's power to quell the angry tumult of the raging sea; compared it to the troubled waters of a disturbed conscience; pleaded with them to trust in that all-powerful One who could, by the power of His love, bring peace and tranquility where once raged unrest and tumult.

The sermon was ended. I could see the tell-tale moisture in the eyes of my loved ones that told the effect my words had produced upon them. Tears of pride; pride for the brother, for the companion of childhood days. "A grand effort," whispered my uncle, taking my hands in his own. "You have found your calling, my boy. You will accomplish great good."

The principal members of my congregation crowded around me, overwhelming me with their congratulations. I accepted the ovation as modestly as possible, under the circumstances, but my heart glowed with a great feeling of love for all mankind; my breast swelled with conscious pride. I returned with my uncle to his house. I agreed, at his earnest solicitation, to remain with him two days.



On the road he told me of his plans concerning Ralph. He was to go to Rutgers the beginning of the next term, and be given as much opportunity as had been afforded me. "And if he turns out as well as you have, my boy, I shall have two nephews to be honestly proud of." I glanced over my shoulder and said to Ralph, who occupied the back seat of the carriage with Ethel: "There is not much doubt about that; is there, brother?"

A gleam of resolute determination glowed in his eyes.

"I shall try, Lorraine; depend on it," and he meant it.

"Try, and with the help of God you will succeed," was my response.

We chatted on various subjects, until my uncle's house was reached. How happy I felt, how well satisfied with the world and the people in it!

The hour was fast approaching three, when my relative drew rein before the old familiar door-step, and Mrs. Ronclere, beginning to show her age, came out of the house to congratulate me upon my success and welcome me home.

Kind old soul! She went to her eternal home a few months later.

The snowy cloth was laid for the late Sunday dinner. My uncle usually ate that meal at noon, but on the Sabbath four o'clock was the hour. A happy family, our hearts overflowing with love for each other and good feeling toward all mankind, we gathered about the table. My uncle requested me to say grace, to call upon the Lord to bless the food of which we were about to partake. I did so, a quaver of emotion in my voice. It was the first time I had so officiated at my relative's table. During the meal my uncle turned to me and laughingly said:

"I suppose the next thing I will hear of or be invited to will be the wedding of the Reverend Lorraine Herschel.



You know the scriptural saying: 'It is not well that man should live alone.'"

I know I turned ridiculously red. I could not help it. I was about to retort in badinage that he—my uncle—had not considered the passage he had quoted, but upon second thought did not do so.

"When I can find some one who will marry me then will I take a wife," I said.

He shook his head significantly.

"When you are ready, I do not think you will find that a difficult matter," he remarked.

I remember feeling myself growing redder in the face; my blushes were growing uncomfortable to me. I glanced at Ethel. She was blushing, too; my brother watching her with a half playful, half serious look in his gray eyes.

"We will see," I said, and the subject was dropped. We arose from the table. After dinner, in company with Ralph, Ethel and my uncle, I strolled over the old place, visiting the fields and familiar scenes of boyhood days. How changed some of them seemed to me. The stream that ran through the meadow, to my boyish eyes almost a river, now appeared diminished in size, much smaller, a mere rivulet. Even the fields seemed not so extensive. There is so much more in life to a child. Not for ambition or wealth, but peace, happiness, contentment. Are not these better than fame or gold?

We lingered until the sun went down in golden glory, and then returned to the house. During the greater part of the next two days I was with my brother, coaching him for his coming examination. He seemed eager, anxious to pass without an error—a laudable ambition, to encourage the fulfillment of which I exerted myself to the utmost. And he was successful, passing without one mistake, with



honor. I felt proud of him when I heard of it. I could not be present, a sick parishioner claiming my presence and attention. I saw Ethel alone, once, before returning to my pastoral duties. She was standing by the gate, watching Ralph and my uncle, who were engaged in earnest conversation as they approached the house. I had been writing, outlining my sermon for the coming Sabbath, and had strolled out of the library for air.

I approached her without being seen or heard.

"Thinking?" I asked.

She started slightly and turned her face to me.

"Indulging in day dreams," she replied.

"A dangerous pastime," I remarked.

"Why?" in a tone of innocent surprise.

I laughed lightly.

"You know it is claimed by some that when the mind is abstract and wandering during waking hours the father of sin has possession of it?"

"Is that really true?"

"It is so said."

A roguish twinkle came to her jet-black eyes. With a sly glance she murmured:

"Strange! I was thinking of you."

"There are exceptions to every rule and saying," I hastened to remark, flushing—an unpleasant habit and one I never could control.

"Then in this case there must be an exception?"

"Most assuredly." Then, taking her hand, I asked: "Do you think of your big brother often?"

"Every day, Lorraine, and oh, how lonely Ralph and I have been without you!" her eyes sparkling with emotion.

"And I have in turn missed you," I said in a low tone,



bending over her. "We were such inseparable companions, you know."

"Yes."

I held her hand.

"Would that we were never to be parted again," I cried fervently, pressing it. I would probably have said much more; my heart was yearning to speak my love, and ask her to be my life companion, the partner of my joys and sorrows, my beloved wife, but at that moment Ralph and my uncle reached the gate, and I said no more.

My brother glanced inquiringly from her face to mine, but said nothing. My uncle simply smiled, a very significant smile. Ethel was trembling!

The morning I took my departure Ralph and I were alone. I had been solving a difficult problem for him. I had promised to do so before I left. The intricate example had been proven and I was preparing to go, when he asked in a peculiar tone:

"Brother, do you love Ethel?"

I was drawing on my gloves, but ceased and, turning, looked him in the face.

"Why, what a question, Ralph! Of course, I love her. Do not you? We have been as brothers and sisters so many years."

"And you still possess for her that brotherly love?"

I hesitated a moment. What could be his object in asking such a question? Finally I replied:

"Yes, a brother's love, intensified by the years that have passed. My heart has developed, grown larger during these years. Naturally it has greater power for love now than then. Tell me, why do you question me thus?"

He sighed deeply.

"Some day I will tell you," was his reply.



I left him, wondering if he, too, looked upon the fair one with covetous eyes, if his heart yearned for her as did my own.

"But no," I reasoned. "He is so young. He cannot know what such love is."

Ah! I did not know. I never discovered it until too late. I judged him by myself. I thought that he was as I had been at his age. In a few days I had forgotten the circumstance. It all came to me in the bitter days that followed in after years and wrecked my life.



## CHAPTER XV.

## "THE TELLING OF IT."

Ralph entered college. I could not accompany him to New Brunswick without neglecting my duties, and that I could not bring myself to even think of. To be successful it is necessary to be faithful, and so (not without a pang of disappointment, for I yearned to see the old familiar place, its brown stone buildings and grassy lawn) I saw him take his departure, accompanied by our uncle, and bade him God speed.

The months passed rapidly. I had not visited my former home since the morning of Ralph's departure, and then only for a few hours, and was beginning to feel homesick. A longing to gaze upon the beautiful face of Ethel seemed to possess me, and I had made up my mind to take advantage of the first opportunity to visit my uncle's house, when I was unexpectedly summoned there by the death of Ethel's mother.

A boy, mounted upon a wiry little pony, dashed up to my door one morning and conveyed the mournful tidings. I did not lose any time, but, putting my horse into the shafts of my buggy as expeditiously as possible, set out upon my twenty-mile drive.

She was dead when I arrived; had breathed her last some ten minutes before I entered the house. I gazed upon her cold white face, and murmured:



"So must it be some day with each of us. God's will be done."

The grief of the orphaned girl was almost inconsolable. She loved her mother and her sudden demise nearly prostrated her.

From my uncle I learned that Mrs. Ronclere had retired the night before, feeling very fatigued, but not suffering pain. In the morning she had not felt able to arise from bed. In a few hours she was dead.

"An affection of the heart," the physician said, and so signed the burial certificate.

How uncertain is life!

The funeral took place the following day. Rather hastily, one would say, but the sight of her mother's pale, quiet face, cold and still in death, seemed to produce such violent demonstrations of grief on the part of Ethel that the physician hinted significantly that the sooner the sad ceremonies were over and done with, the better it would be for her, as nervous prostration would surely follow if she could not be quieted; and so my uncle concluded it advisable to act upon the doctor's suggestion, and made immediate preparations for the last sad rites.

For two days after the funeral Ethel kept to her room, refusing to be comforted, and turning from food; then, to our joy and surprise, she reappeared at the table, taking up the life of former years, seemingly resolved to consign her grief to the tomb where her loved mother lay, peacefully sleeping that last long sleep, to awaken only at the final trump.

Only by the exercise of great will power could this end have been reached, and I found myself wondering at the force of character, of resolute determination thus exhibited by the girl, sufficiently strong to hold her grief in



check, to control a heart left lonely and bereft of that love which the deceased had always felt for her child.

"Grief would not kill this one," I murmured, and in the years that followed I found I had spoken the truth, unconsciously. No, neither grief nor remorse! I remained the balance of the week. Monday when I arrived, it was not until Saturday evening that I took my departure, and when I did it was with the words of Ethel Ronclere ringing in my ears, chiming in my heart the words in which she said that she would be my wife. It came about in this manner: The night following the morning that the girl had come to us again, after two days of silent mourning, my uncle took me to the library, and when the door was closed behind us, said:

"My boy, for some time I have been thinking. I have seen that you dearly love this girl Ethel and I believe that she returns it. She is now alone in the world. Father, mother have both gone to another and better existence, and she is left without any of kindred, without a protector. You understand me. Not absolutely helpless, for as long as I live my house shall be her home, but not to me can she pour out the world of affection that dwells in her heart. You, of all the men in the world, are best suited to her. You have been children together, have loved each other for years, and know each other in heart and soul. You must be her protector—father, mother, husband to her. Go to her, Lorraine. Ask her to trust her future in your hands. Depend on it, she will not hesitate. She will not refuse you."

I grasped his two hands and shook them warmly in mute thankfulness. His words showed me my duty, and opened up before my eyes a vista of long days of everlasting happiness, joy and peace, such as man ne'er pos-



sessed before—at least such were my thoughts. Then I left him, a sad smile upon his lips. Perchance he thought of his own youth, the bitter disappointment of his life! Some men never forget!

I found her in the dining-room, gazing out of the window, the dusky shadows of coming night resting upon her radiant hair, a far-away look in her eyes. She turned as I approached her, and must have felt what was coming, as her eyes sought the floor and she trembled slightly.

I led her to a seat and, taking her little, trembling hand, said:

“Ethel dear, I have come to ask you a question. God, in his better judgment, has seen fit to deprive you of your loved one. Your heart is sad and lonely, weary in its eager yearning for love. Can you not give to me in addition to the affection you have always felt for me that other love, which now has no object to rest upon? Will you not give me the right to cherish and protect you with my heart’s best love? Love next to that I feel for my eternal master? Tell me, dearest, will you not become my wife?”

I could feel her trembling nervously. Suddenly she burst into tears, tears that I could not understand.

“You will always love me?” she sobbed at last.

Hardly understanding the question, I replied.

“I have always loved you, my darling; loved you as a brother, until seven years ago that affection changed to the burning passion of a lover. I cannot see why I should change. My love for you is my entire being. I cannot change that, unless I change myself.”

She dried her tears and composed herself with an effort; then, looking up into my eyes, said:

“I will be your wife, Lorraine.”

With a cry of joy I clasped her to my breast. Oh, God!



how happy I felt. My brain, dazed as one intoxicated, almost mad with rapturous bliss. My pulses throbbed as never before. In my mad passion I rained kisses upon her upturned face, brow, cheeks, lips, until she drew back, as if in alarm. I had never acted so before, but there was some excuse for it. She was my love, my life. How I hated to tear myself away, but it must be done. The Sabbath must find me at my post, doing God's work, and oh! how I thanked Him that night for so blessing me.

That scene now comes vividly to my mind. I can almost feel the beating of her heart against my own as I write. I shall never forget that happiness. I hope I shall never want to. I told my uncle of Ethel's answer before leaving. His kindly face glowed with satisfaction.

"I told you so," he cried. "I knew it before your words informed me. God has been good to you, my boy."

I agreed with him then. Surely no mortal had ever been blessed as I. I would not at that moment have changed places with a king. What coronet is more precious or brings more honor than the love of a good woman!

It was midnight before I reached the parsonage.



## CHAPTER XVI.

## DEATH AND MARRIAGE.

From that time on I made weekly visits to my love. Each Thursday found me at my uncle's house. I would drive over in the morning, remain all night and return to my home the following day. I received frequent letters from my brother, each one containing a glowing account of his success at college. For some reason I never informed him of my engagement to Ethel. I cannot understand why I did not. The facts were so well known in the neighborhood, were the talk of the country, in fact, that I suppose I felt as if he must be in possession of them, and so, although I wrote him each week, I never mentioned the circumstance. My uncle also neglected to do so. I afterward learned why Ethel did not. Upon making my accustomed visit one day, about six weeks after my engagement, I found my relative greatly troubled over the receipt of a letter, which had just been delivered him by the boy who earned a few dollars each week by officiating as mail carrier for many of the villagers who resided at some distance from the postoffice, my uncle being one of these.

"Bad news, my boy," he said, gravely, handing me the open letter. It was from the dean of Rutgers College and informed my uncle that an epidemic of diphtheria was raging in the city and had attacked many of the students, Ralph among the number.



"We have had several deaths," the letter went on to say, "and I consider it my duty to inform you that there is great danger of the disease proving fatal. We are doing all that can possibly be done to check it, but the nature of the affliction is such that but little can be accomplished."

I silently returned the letter, the handsome face of my brother coming up before me. I could picture him lying, suffering among strangers far from home. The tears came to my eyes; my heart seemed filled to overflowing. And if he should die, if I should never see the love in his eyes, hear his ringing laugh again! The thought was terrible to me. I loved him so.

"I will go to him," I said resolutely. "I will nurse him back to life. My place is by his side! I promised our angel mother upon her dying bed that I would shield him from evil. I must keep my word."

"Nobly spoken," cried my uncle. "But think. Will your presence do aught to relieve his sufferings? Can you benefit him any by thus exposing yourself? The disease is a contagious one. You may be stricken. Remember, Lorraine, you have others to live for."

His words surprised me. I thought he should have urged me to start at once.

"I cannot leave my brother to die among strangers without making an effort to save him," I cried.

"He shall not die among strangers unattended," replied my relative. "I will go to him. I am getting on in years. If I should contract the disease and it should terminate seriously my loss would not be so severely felt."

The tears came to my eyes. I sprang forward and grasped his hand.

"Forgive me, sir," I cried. "In my heart I thought you unfeeling. I have wronged you."



He smiled sadly.

"My words may have seemed so to you," he said. "But I was thinking of you when I spoke them—of you and Ethel. No; let me go to Ralph. Believe me, it is best."

But I would not accept this proposition, and before the light of another day was on my way to the side of my suffering brother. I kissed my darling before I hurried away.

"I will not die," I murmured. "That God who has blessed me with your love will bring me back to you."

"Do you think he will die?" she asked, in a faint tone.

"Pray heaven that he may not," I cried fervently.

She gave utterance to a faint sigh, and I left her side.

I found Ralph burning up with fever and delirious. He did not know me.

"One of the worst cases, sir," the attendant informed me.

For two days I sat by his side, looking upon the wasted face, into the wild eyes, hearing the gasping, horrible sound, as he vainly tried to clear his throat of the deadly membrane.

On the morning of the third day a telegram reached me. I tore open the envelope. It was from Ethel, and bore these words:

"Come home. Your uncle is dying.           ETHEL."

I staggered and would have fallen had not the attendant, who was near, supported me.

My uncle dying, my brother very near death's door!

What could I do?

The doctor entered the room at that moment. One glance at my brother's face and he said:

"He will recover. He is now out of danger. A change for the better has taken place during the night."



Fervently I thanked God for all his mercies. My brother would recover, but my uncle, my kind-hearted relative, what of him?

"You are sure that all danger is past?" I asked, turning to the doctor.

"Quite sure, sir," he replied.

My mind now at rest concerning Ralph, I determined to obey the message sent me by my affianced wife. I would hasten to my uncle's side. My brother needed me no longer. I could return to him when my uncle had recovered, for I did not believe him dying. Ethel was alarmed, that was all; he was possibly very ill. But I could not bring myself to believe his illness of a serious nature. He had been so strong and well when I had left him but a few short days before. So I reasoned. The next morning found me at home once more—my boyhood's home! Ethel met me at the door, her eyes red from weeping, looking tired and worn out from loss of rest.

"You are just in time," she whispered faintly. "The doctor says he cannot live an hour longer."

Her words fell upon my heart as molten lead. Then it must be true. He was really dying! With a heavy heart I opened the door of his bed-room and approached the bed. He was conscious and knew me at once. A glad light of satisfaction came to his eyes.

"Thank—God—you have—come," he gasped, his breath coming with difficulty. I took his hand and pressed it. I never loved my relative so much as when I felt that I should lose him. We seldom appreciate the value of anything until it is lost to us forever.

"He cannot recover," the physician assured me, "and he knows it. In some way he has contracted diphtheria, and when it attacks persons as old as your relative it generally takes them off."



His modulated, professional voice grated harshly upon my nerves. How could my uncle have contracted this disease? Ah, that fatal letter! It must have come from that. I could assign it to no other cause. My dear uncle never spoke again on earth. For an hour I sat by his side, Ethel near me, clasping the dear hand in my own. Several times he essayed to speak, but failed. The struggle for breath became more intense, the kindly eyes grew wild, then dim, the heaving breast ceased its struggle, and my uncle passed away. It is needless to describe the sorrow that took possession of my heart. I cannot record how I suffered that night.

The doctor advised an immediate burial. "The disease is a contagious one, and the sooner he is under ground the better."

I took his advice, and the following day Ethel and I followed the dear one to the grave.

We were alone!

I could not well return to my brother at once. My relative's affairs were to be settled up, the will must be read and other legal matters attended to. So I put off returning to him, feeling easy in my mind concerning him, as the physican had given me positive assurance that he was out of danger.

"How shocked he will be when he hears of our bereavement," I thought.

The next day the will was read. I found he had left everything to Ralph, Ethel and me. She was not related to him, but he loved her as a dear child, and gave her an equal share of his property with us.

I found myself rich, for my uncle died worth nearly \$200,000, which surprised me greatly. I had never supposed him so well off. I settled up the estate, putting my



brother's share in the bank, and also securing the portion coming to Ethel. She, poor girl, seemed to feel the death of Uncle Ralph as keenly as though she had been his own daughter. He had been kind to her, and had really taken the place of her dead father.

It came to me suddenly one day, about one week after the death of my relative, that it would be best to hasten my wedding day. Ethel was now virtually alone in the world, with the exception of myself. There was no one to whom she could go, no home save mine open to her. She was to be my wife; why not have it over and done with?

I told her of my thoughts. She looked at me reproachfully.

"So soon after our uncle's death?" she murmured.

I flushed, my old unfortunate habit. I almost felt ashamed of myself. But what was to be done? She could not live in the house by herself. What difference would a few months make? I knew my uncle would have approved of it. So I said:

"I will admit, dear Ethel, that my haste seems almost wanting in respect for the dead, but is it not best so? We need not indulge in wedding festivities. They are to my mind unnecessary and frivolous at any time. A plain marriage, and you will have a protector, one whose life will go to prove his unbounded love." I explained all to her and she finally consented. We were made man and wife the following day, the gray-haired pastor of the village church officiating. He warmly commended my action. "It is the best for both of you," he said.

There was some little talk about the wedding taking place so soon after my uncle's death, but every village, city, town or country has its gossips, old women and



scandal mongers, and they must talk. The majority of the villagers looked upon it as the proper thing. My heart told me I had done right, and when I clasped my bride in my arms and heard her words "You are my husband" I would not have cared if the entire community had condemned my action. I had my wife, that was all I desired. She filled my heart, my life. What need I care what the world said?

That feeling did not remain with me in the years that followed. To prevent that same world from talking I have suffered, isolated myself from men, led them to believe me dead, but it was for her sake even then.

Ah me! If we could but foretell what the future has in store for us!



## CHAPTER XVII.

## AN ASTOUNDING REVELATION.

Three days after my marriage I returned to my brother's side. I found him convalescent, looking pale and weak, but out of danger.

"I am glad you have come," he cried eagerly upon seeing me. "I have felt so home-sick for the sight of an old familiar face. The doctor won't allow any of my fellow students to visit me for fear of contagion even now. It seems to me a needless precaution." He spoke fretfully.

He was as yet unaware of the death of Uncle Ralph. I had not written to him upon that sad subject. I preferred telling him. So, breaking the news as gently as possible, I told him of our loss.

His handsome face turned deathly white; pale before, it was ghastly now. He started and sat erect in bed.

"Uncle Ralph dead and buried?" he gasped hoarsely.

I tried my best to compose him. He seemed to take it very hard.

"If I could only have seen him once before he was buried," he moaned, rocking to and fro, his hands to his head.

I showed him wherein this had been impossible, and gradually succeeded in calming him.

"And Ethel," he demanded suddenly, "what of her? Where is she?"







"Ethel is my wife now. I thought it best to hasten our marriage," I replied.

He turned his eyes upon me, a terrible look of horror in their depths. I fell back, amazed, startled at that wild glare.

"Your wife?" his lips forming the words, his tongue refusing to articulate.

"Yes, my wife. We have been engaged for some time."

He still sat staring at me, the bed clothing gathered about him, his hands working nervously, his eyes still retaining that awful look.

"Engaged for some time?" he repeated, as if not quite comprehending my words; then, with a shudder and leaning toward me, he cried:

"How long, how long have you been engaged?"

I told him and explained why I had hastened the wedding.

"I thought you knew of the engagement," I concluded, alarmed at his strange actions, wondering what it all meant.

The wasted features grew hard and stern. A bitterness of expression took the place of the one of horrified amazement.

"How should I know?" he muttered. "You never wrote me. She," setting his teeth together, "kept me in ignorance of it. My uncle, probably thinking you had done so, never mentioned it. How should I know, I say?" the last words uttered almost fiercely.

My loved brother had never before spoken to me in such a tone. I felt grieved and hurt.

"It was an oversight, dear Ralph. Knowing it so well ourselves, the fact not being any secret even to the country people, we never thought of writing to you about it. Then



again, it was but a short time after the death of Ethel's mother. Possibly that is why she did not write you. It was carelessness on my part, likely thoughtlessness with Uncle Ralph."

"Do you think that is the reason why Ethel did not write?" his eyes upon my face.

"I cannot explain it in any other way. Your action grieves me, brother. I expected to see your face light up upon receiving the intelligence, hoped to hear you wish me joy. Instead of that the tidings seem to have had only the effect of causing you sorrow, I might say terror. You are completely unmanned."

I spoke reproachfully. I felt hurt, and did not try to conceal it. He smiled a bitter, almost pitying, smile.

"Does it seem so to you?" he murmured, his voice sounding weak. "It all came so suddenly, was so unexpected. I have been very ill; take that into consideration. I am far from being strong even now. That and the death of my uncle coming upon me at the same time, has unmanned me, as you say. Oh, God help me!" with a wild, appealing cry, changing from the weak, explanatory tone to one of pitiful supplication. I sprang to save him from falling, as I could see that he was about to faint. My arms received his helpless form.

"Weakness," I muttered. "Just recovering from a severe spell of sickness. The sad tidings of death has, as he has said, unmanned him. The surprise occasioned by the other has finished the work. But why that horrified, bitter expression? Why that glare in the eyes?"

My mind wandering, a feeling of weight at heart, I tenderly laid him back upon the pillows and set about restoring him to consciousness. My efforts were attended with success. In a few moments a deep sigh welled up from his breast and the eyelids fluttered apart.



Seeing me bending over him, he shuddered slightly and again closed his eyes. Why should he seek to avoid my gaze? Suddenly, like a flash, there dawned upon my mind the suspicion that weakness was not solely responsible for his strange behavior. It must be something else. Bending over him, I whispered slowly:

"Brother, tell me, and truly before God, do you love Ethel? Is this the explanation of your conduct?"

His eyes opened at once, a peculiar look in their depth.

"I asked you that question once. You replied: 'Yes, with a brother's love.' Let your words be my answer."

The peculiar look that accompanied these words startled me.

"With only a brother's love?" I demanded anxiously.

His answering action caused me to draw back in amazement. Throwing the covering back off the bed, his hair in disorder, his mouth firmly set, he arose upon one elbow; then, throwing aside the pillow and bolster, exercising more strength than I would have thought possible, he plunged his hand down beneath the mattress and began an eager search for some object. Presently a glad cry escaped him. "It is still there," he muttered. "During my illness they have not taken it from me." Then, withdrawing his hand, I saw clutched in the thin, wasted fingers a photograph.

"Look upon this," he cried, thrusting it toward me. "You see the face?" I glanced upon the pictured face—the face of Ethel! My wife! Hurriedly he went on: "You see, it is her face, the most beautiful face on earth to me, the face of my boyhood companion—your wife now. You ask me if my love for her is greater than that of a brother? I will reply, and tell you the truth, my brother. Yes; my love is not a love; it is a passion, burning, consuming



me! For her I have struggled and studied far into the night, that she might feel proud of me! For her I have prayed God to spare my life. All over now. Useless! She has gone from me. To you is her heart given. She is your wife," the words coming in a low wail. Then, choking with emotion, he murmured: "I wish you joy and long years of happiness, brother. I could not help loving her, and even at this moment cannot drive her from my heart. I shall always love her. You will not censure nor blame me, I know. We have been loving brothers, you and me. No cloud has marred the bright sunshine of our devotion. Oh, if I could only have told you this before! It is the only secret I have ever had from you. Oh, why did I not tell you!"

The mournful, pathetic tone reached my heart. I felt as never I had felt before. How I pitied him! The excitement had produced a weakening effect upon him. He fell back upon the pillows and turned his face toward the wall.

"I hope I may die," he muttered.

The photograph fell from his nerveless fingers, then the reaction came; the hot, scalding tears burst from his eyes, while I, shocked, horrified, amazed, sat staring at him, much as he had glared upon me but a short time before. I had judged him wrongly! He had looked upon her with covetous eyes and a longing heart. He, my brother, loved my wife as a lover loves! Could I blame him? He was the same age as herself, had been with her inseparably and constantly since childhood days. I loved her. Why should not the same divine passion influence him as it had myself? I uttered no word of reproach. I felt none for her. She was as God had made her—beautiful, to attract the hearts and bewilder the senses of men.



For that she was not to blame, nor could he well prevent nature from asserting itself. But she—could she have encouraged him? The thought flashed through my brain like wild fire. If she had felt love for him she would not now be my wife.

She was no coquette; of that I felt sure. She would not have encouraged him and then wedded me. No; my beautiful wife loved me, and a divine pity possessed me as I sat gazing upon the form of him I loved next to her own beautiful self. He lay sobbing tumultuously, the paroxysms of grief violent and racking his wasted form. I feared a relapse might be the result of all this. If I had only known, I would not have told him at that time.

"Come, dear brother," I murmured, bending over him; "come, be a man! She is not lost to you. The same roof that shelters her will be your own. She will ever be near you. Our family circle will be the same as in days of yore, the kind face of our relative excepted. We will be as we have ever been, loving brothers—she, now more than ever, your dear sister. You are young. This first love will leave your heart, now that its fulfillment is impossible. There are other bright, beautiful faces in the world, other lovely women. You will marry and we will all live together, a happy family."

The frantic sobbing ceased. He turned his face toward me, and, the traces of his violent grief upon his cheeks, replied:

"Yours is a noble nature, Lorraine. Your heart beats with love for me, I feel. I will strive to control my grief, but the memory of Ethel will never leave my heart. I have loved her so many years. She is the only woman I shall ever love. You will see, I speak truly. Now, brother, one favor I will ask of you. Do not tell her how I suffered



when you told me this. I do not want her to know. Will you promise me this?"

I gave the desired promise. A long-drawn sigh of relief came from his lips. Taking my hand, he clasped it in his own.

"Leave me, brother. I am weary. Leave me to myself, to sleep."

I pressed his hand. He turned his face once more to the wall, and I left him, loving him more fondly that moment than at any time in my life. I pitied him, and the combined forces of compassion and brotherly love brought him closer to my heart.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## GATHERING SHADOWS.

I secured a room at an hotel not far from the depot and college and, after thinking the matter over, concluded it best not to disturb Ralph by another visit that day. "He will need rest and time to recover from the severe blow he has this day received. I will visit him in the morning, not before." So, going to my room, I ordered writing materials brought there and composed myself to write a long letter to my wife. I mentioned the fact that Ralph was improving rapidly, and that just as soon as he was strong enough I should insist upon his taking a vacation and coming home. I also stated that I would be at home to fill my pulpit upon the coming Sabbath. Then I retired, after a fervent prayer that my dear brother might overcome the sorrow which lay like a weight upon his heart and that this might not estrange us. I awoke bright and early the following morning. The sun was shining in at my window, and I could hear the birds chirping outside. All nature seemed peaceful and bright and my heart gladdened at the sight. It was a beautiful morning in early spring.

Hastily making my toilet, I went downstairs and out upon the street. New Brunswick is a beautiful little city, and I was familiar with every nook and corner of it, and, as I had not had an opportunity to visit any of the old familiar scenes upon the occasion of my former visit, I de-



terminated to take a long walk before eating my matutinal meal, thinking (and rightly, too) that it would give me an appetite. So, for nearly two hours I strolled leisurely along the familiar streets, out into the country, and, returning to my hotel, ate a mighty meal. The hour was not yet six when I had left the hotel. It was nearly nine, when, my meal over, I crossed the railroad track and entered the college grounds.

Ralph was sitting propped up in bed, eating a simple meal of soft boiled eggs, toast and tea, as I entered the room. He seemed glad to see me.

"How are you this morning?" I cried cheerily.

"Much better, brother. See! I have eaten nearly two eggs and this large slice of toast," he replied.

"Keep on like that and you'll soon be out," I remarked, drawing a chair up to the bed.

"I hope so," he murmured wistfully. "I want to get out just as soon as I can. Lying in bed so long is not pleasant, and a fine morning like this makes a fellow's blood tingle to be out in the air."

"Don't exercise undue haste," I continued. "A relapse is always dangerous."

"Don't worry about me. I will take proper care of myself," he replied.

After a few moments' silence, he munching the toast, I watching him, I said:

"Just as soon as you are strong enough I want you to come home for a few days. A week in the country with us will do more to put you on your feet than all the physic in the universe. God's medicines, fresh air and sunshine, are what you now most need."

He averted his eyes for a moment, and then, without replying to my words, asked:



"Did Uncle Ralph die wealthy?"

The question struck me as being a peculiar one, coming from him, but I hastened to reply, telling him all.

For some time after I had finished he sat silently gazing out of the window.

"You say my share of the money is in the bank?"

"Yes; I deposited it there for you."

"Until I am of age?" a strange eagerness in his tone.

"No; the terms of the will expressly dictated that you were to have the full power to act for yourself, subject to no limitation and unrestrained by guardianship."

"Thank you. Dear Uncle Ralph; I shall think of him with sorrow every time I sign his name to a check. I wish I could have seen him," and the tears came to his eyes.

"You were so low when he died," I hastened to say.

"Yes, I know," with a sigh. "Why is it, I wonder, that the good men of this world, those who are a blessing to the community at large, usually are the ones selected by the Almighty to leave it?"

"The works of God are sometimes mysterious," I said, "but they cannot be wrong."

"No; I suppose not," absently. "When do you propose returning home?" changing the subject.

"To-day is Thursday. I must be home by Sunday."

"Then you can remain with me one day more?"

"Yes, I shall not leave you before to-morrow night."

"I am glad of that. I want to see as much of you as I can before you go."

His words did not strike me as being strange then. They returned to me a few days later.

I remained by his side nearly the entire day, leaving him only to eat my meals. We talked on many subjects, but never one word about Ethel. I noticed this. He was striving to forget his hopeless love.



The following day (Friday) I read to him. He seemed to enjoy it. It was a day of pleasure to me. That night I took my departure, after a long conversation with the worthy physician as to the time necessary for Ralph to regain his strength sufficiently to justify him in starting for home.

"A few days more, with proper care, and he will be all right," he said.

"I have no fear but that he will receive all the attention necessary while under your care, Doctor," I warmly replied. He bowed in a gratified manner. None of us are so strong but what a few words of commendation and praise will reach our vulnerable spot. Vanity is the besetting sin of mankind and womankind.

But my friend the doctor was worthy all praise—a Christian gentleman and a thorough student; not an old man, but old age is not always necessary to insure wisdom.

I arrived at home early Saturday afternoon. Home! Sweet, sweet home! The words of the immortal song came to my mind as I walked up the path leading to the house.

My little wife met me at the door. How pleasant it is to have our loved ones waiting to press the welcoming kiss upon our lips, glad to have us with them once more.

I must not write in this strain; it will prove too much for me. Even now the tell-tale moisture fills my eyes, and I cannot see my paper before me. It touches the old sore spot, strikes the tender chords of memory, and that I must not indulge in. The past must be buried.

Eagerly my wife questioned me about Ralph. She had received my letter, but preferred hearing from my lips the news. I told her all, omitting the portion I had promised my brother not to disclose.



"And he will be with us next week?" she murmured when I had finished.

"The doctor says he will be sufficiently strong," I replied.

An hour's chat and I buried myself in my library. My sermon for the next day had yet to be prepared, and, although (I will confess it) I would have preferred remaining with my darling, God's work must not be neglected.

In a few hours I had finished and then returned to Ethel. She was laying the cloth for supper, singing a low, sweet song. I stood in the doorway and watched her unperceived. How tranquil and beautiful the scene to me! The busy little clock ticking merrily upon the mantel, telling away our lives; a few pots of geraniums, blooming upon the flower-stand near the window; the snowy cloth laid for supper, while from the kitchen near floated the aroma of coffee and the cooking meats. A home scene—a scene I shall never forget.

Presently my wife ceased to sing. Her eyes glanced absently out of the window. It was just growing dusk outside. Mechanically she gazed, and then a convulsive sigh came from her breast.

I hastened toward her.

"What, sighing?" I murmured, taking her in my arms. "Sad, my darling?"

"No, no, Lorraine; I was only thinking. Sad times come to us all sometimes. Even in the happiest moments the thought comes: 'Will this always last?'"

"Foolish little wife," I murmured tenderly. "Why should it not last? You must not think that way. It seems like doubting the goodness of God."

She smiled, turning her face up to mine. I saw a tear in her eye. I kissed it away, and soon she was singing again.



The Sabbath came (blessed day of rest). My sermon reached the hearts of my congregation. I could see it by the holy look in their eyes as they filed out of the church. Possibly some of them forgot all about it before reaching home; many do that. If the story of our Savior could be kept constantly before the minds of all, every day the same as Sunday, there would be more and better Christians.

There are too many days to forget what is taught on the Sabbath!

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday came; no letter from Ralph; no sight of his beloved face.

Thursday morning a letter was handed me by the postmaster. I recognized my brother's handwriting upon the envelope, and without waiting to reach home, tore it open and read it. The news it brought appalled me, brought a sickening feeling to my heart. This is what it said:

"Philadelphia, April —, 18—.

"My Dearly Beloved Brother—This communication will doubtless bring sorrow to your heart and grieve you sorely, but I cannot help it. Forgive me for what I am about to do—what I have already done. When last I saw you you urged me to visit you, and in your society, surrounded by love and care, recover my strength and spirits once more. Dear brother, that is impossible. Within your house, loved by you, is the woman my heart goes out to. I could not bear to gaze upon her. The sight of you, loving and caressing her, would be more than I could stand. It would kill me, brother! surely kill me. You cannot conceive how much I love her. It would not be acting as a brother to dwell beneath your roof with that feeling in my breast. I had made up my mind to that even while you were with me, sitting by my bed at Rutgers. So I have determined to seek my fortune elsewhere,



where I shall not run the risk of coming in contact with either her or yourself. The kind provision made for me by Uncle Ralph enables me to do this. I have drawn my money from the bank, and when this letter reaches you, will be far out on my way to the far West. Don't grieve for me, my brother. Believe me, I have considered well the step I am taking, and I believe it is for the best.

"I shall not write you again, as I wish to keep my whereabouts a secret from you. Forgive me for thus wounding your loving heart, Lorraine. Think well over it. You will not blame me. Put yourself in my place, and remember that I have not the grace of God to sustain me as you would have. Would you not suffer even with that on your side? Say nothing to Ethel. If she asks of me say I have gone West to engage in business. It will not be a lie. I would not ask you to tell a deliberate untruth.

"Good-by. God bless you. Pray for me.

"RALPH."



## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE SHADOWS FALL.

The surrounding objects swam before my eyes. I believe I should have fallen had I not clutched at the side of the doorway and held on tightly for support. Outside the bright sun was shining. In my heart black sorrow reigned. I so loved him, my brother, and now he was lost to me forever. Was I to blame? I asked myself the question. Answering conscience replied: "No, you were ignorant of the true state of affairs. You have done nothing wrong." Still I felt sad, and reproached myself. If I had only known of his love for Ethel I would never have made her my wife. I would have suppressed my own burning passion and cheerfully given her to him—aye, performed the ceremony myself, for the sake of their happiness. For, would she not have been near me, even as my brother's wife? Would not their home have been mine? True, she would not have been my wife, but I should have had my brother! Now it was too late. What had been done could not now be undone. She was my wife. My brother had gone from me—gone out upon the world to strive to forget, if possible, the love that had blighted his youth!

I mechanically walked out of the postoffice, and took the road for home, feeling for the first time in life dissatisfied with myself, reproaching myself for a thing I could not help, feeling somehow or other as if I was to blame. My



beautiful wife met me at the door with a smile parting her lips.

"Any mail?" she asked, as I entered the cottage.

"None for you, dear," I replied, averting my face, to hide my sorrow.

"Was there any for you?" she persisted, coming to my side and striving to catch my eye.

"Yes, one letter," I answered, looking down upon her.

"Who was it from? Come; no secrets from your wife," roguishly.

I clasped her about the waist with one arm and slowly walked with her toward the window.

"And has my little wife no secrets from her husband?" I asked her, halting where the sunlight could rest upon her face.

Was I mistaken, or did she tremble slightly? Was that look in her beautiful eyes one of fear?

"Why do you ask me that?" she murmured faintly, turning her face from me.

I hastened to reassure her.

"An idle question," I cried. "Do not think any more of it."

Still I wondered some at her strange behavior. "It is nothing," I assured myself after a moment's thought. Surely, there was nothing in her past that I did not know. She could not be the possessor of a secret of any importance.

She gently released herself from my embrace and sat upon a low rocker near the pots of geraniums. She was evidently distressed, but soon overcame her emotion, controlling herself by the exercise of her will.

"You have not yet told me who the letter was from," she said, absently, evidently desirous of changing the subject.



"It is from Ralph," I replied.

She sprang to her feet, her eyes gleaming, her face eager.

"From Ralph? Is he coming home? Tell me," standing in an attitude of eager expectancy.

I felt myself wondering again at the sudden change in her demeanor the mere mention of his name had brought about. Could she have loved him as he loved her? Did she still feel that love for him? This thought kept coming into my mind. I scouted the idea and drove it from me. "Ridiculous," I said to myself. "Is she not my wife—pure and innocent?"

I drew a low chair close to her side.

"No, Ralph is not coming home," I said slowly, conjecturing how I could best tell her why without revealing all.

A shade of disappointment in her eyes, then a sigh of relief followed my words.

"Not coming home? And why? I thought he was coming to recruit his strength. You told me so," she murmured.

"Yes; I know I did, and at that time thought that such would be the case, but in his letter to-day he tells me that he has withdrawn his money from the bank and is going west to seek his fortune. It seems that my brother has developed a capricious disposition." I could not say more. Her eyes were fixed upon me, wondering amazement depicted therein.

"Left college! Drawn his money from the bank; gone west?" she repeated.

"So his letter informs me."

"And he said nothing of his intentions when you last saw him?"



"Not one word."

"Does he not explain?"

"His letter informs me of the fact. Do not ask for further explanation, dear. Possibly he may enlighten us further later on," I said in a confused, evasive manner.

She gazed full upon me one moment and then, clasping her white hands tightly together, turned and looked out of the window.

I felt that I was not doing right in withholding from her the truth. Was I not acting a lie? Was not the sin as great as the actual telling of it? But I had promised my brother. I could not break my word given him that day at Rutgers. If he had not told her of his love why should I now inform her of it, show her the consequences of his hopeless passion? He did not wish it known. I hardly felt it my place to tell her. And yet I felt at that time that it would be best to tell her all, explain fully why he had taken this unfortunate and unexpected step, but I put the feeling from me, checked the still, small voice within me and so, for the first time in my life, broke one of God's commandments, "Thou shalt not lie." For had I not lied in deed, if not in tongue? God judges from the heart and mind, not from the bare utterances of the mouth, for the tongue may speak righteousness, while the brain and heart are teeming with wickedness. It is not only what we say or do, but even what we think that the Almighty holds us accountable for.

My wife still stood at the window, her face pressed closely to the pane. Of what was she thinking? I could not even imagine. Would that I had possessed the power that day to have read her thoughts! Presently she spoke, her voice low and faint.

"Did he—Ralph—give his address?"



"The letter was written from Philadelphia," I replied.

"He did not say where he was going?"

"Only that he was going west."

"Not mentioning any particular point?" she persisted.

"No."

"Strange that he should have omitted doing so," she murmured.

Not strange to me, but I could not say so. How could I explain to her why he had not given an address?

"Perhaps in the hurry of preparing for departure he overlooked it," I suggested. Another intended lie. Again I had in my eagerness to assure her forgotten my vows to my Maker. How easily they are forgotten!

"Did he say he would write again?" she cried, eagerly turning upon me.

I hesitated. The more I tried to explain the deeper I plunged myself into the mire. What could I say now? I must in some way relieve the anxiety which I could see oppressed her. So I stammered out, feeling my face turning scarlet as I did so:

"Not exactly, but is it not natural to suppose that a brother, loving a foster sister as he loves you, feeling for a brother the affection he does for me, would surely inform those who love him of his success in any new undertaking? Your love for your childhood companion makes you unnecessarily anxious concerning what seems to you the strangeness of his action. I cannot explain more fully. But does it not seem so to you?"

I felt that she was studying my face; could see that my words had not satisfied her.

"Yes; one would naturally suppose so," she replied slowly, "unless that brother for some reason wished to keep his whereabouts a secret from those loved ones."



Then rapidly she continued: "Lorraine, you are keeping something from me, something that my heart tells me concerns me. Why are you doing this? What is your object?" Then, falling on her knees by my side, she burst into tears. "Tell me, my husband! Tell me, why has Ralph taken this step? Don't keep it from me! I feel that it is my right to know. Remember, dear, we were children together. We loved each other so. Why has he turned his back upon us and gone out into the cruel world? Some great sorrow has brought this about. He would not surely give up his bright future, his home—all, if such were not the case. He never was mercenary, never expressed a desire for riches. I knew him so well, my husband; even better, I think, than you. We were of the same age, could understand each other so well. Tell me! You are not to blame for this? Say you are not, Lorraine. Say you are not!"

I recoiled almost in horror from the question. Her vehement grief alarmed me. Never had she acted so before. What could it all mean? Surely she could have no suspicion of the truth, and yet it appeared so.

I gently raised her from her kneeling position and folded her in my arms, her head resting upon my breast. I could feel the beating of her heart as she sobbed in my embrace. Tenderly smoothing her raven locks, I whispered in her ear:

"Surely, my darling, you cannot think as you have spoken. You surely cannot believe me in any way responsible for this action on the part of Ralph. Why, dear, he is my brother. I love him almost as much as I love you. I feel as badly over his sudden departure as you do. Come, dry your tears. I know you love him as a sister. You have in the past been inseparable. Why should you im-



agine that sorrow has caused him to do this? What sorrow, to your knowledge, could be sufficiently great to warrant him in taking this step, to separate himself from those who love him? Come, dry your tears and accept the explanation I have given you, and remember, my darling, everything happens for the best."

With a sudden impulsive movement she released herself from my embrace and stood erect before me. Hastily removing the traces of tears from her eyes, she cried:

"Do you believe that?"

"What, Ethel?"

"What you have just said—'Everything happens for the best?'"

"God in his goodness would not will it otherwise," I replied solemnly.

"Then you think it is for the best that Ralph has gone, removed himself from home and friends, without even coming to say good-by?"

I winced slightly, but replied:

"As God rules the world and governs the minds of all, I must accept it as He wills it."

She sighed, a deep, convulsive sigh. "And you would have me believe this?" she muttered, her white teeth set, a strange look upon her face.

"I would not have you doubt the wisdom of the Almighty," I replied.

"Be it so. I shall remember your words and perhaps some day you will recall them. Still, I believe you are keeping something from me. Do you think it for the best to do so?"

"I know it, my darling, I know it," burst from my lips. Her strange look, her words oppressed me. I felt as if some dark shadow, some ominous cloud was gathering



over our happy home, a cloud that might burst and wreck my peaceful existence.

"Then you admit that you are withholding something from me?" she cried.

I saw (now too late) that I had made an unpardonable mistake. I could not reply to her, merely bowed my head.

She came to my side. Upon her knees, in a pleading tone, she murmured.

"Tell me, my husband. I beg of you, do not burden yourself with a secret which will cause unhappiness between us. I am your wife; I have a right to know. Tell me!"

"I cannot, I cannot. I have given my word that I would not," I cried aloud in my agony of spirit.

"Given your word? To whom—Ralph? I cannot comprehend your action, my husband. You, the soul of truth and honor, pledge yourself to deceive your wife? I know now that this action on the part of Ralph concerns me. I must know all. Come. You need not explain. You have failed to satisfy me with your former explanation. You have the letter that will tell me all I wish to know. Where is the letter? Give me the letter."

I could not hold out longer. I believe I should have gone mad. My brain was reeling. I could feel my blood surging to my head. Rising to my feet I tore the letter from my pocket and gave it to her, then rushed to the door and threw it wide open to admit God's fresh air. I knew that she was rapidly reading the lines of my brother's farewell to me, but I could not turn and face her. I felt weak and leaned heavily against the door frame to keep from falling. A low cry from Ethel, then the sound of a body falling upon the floor caused me to turn. She had fainted!

I hurried to her side, my strength returning to me in that



one brief moment. Stooping, I bent over her. She was breathing heavily, her eyes tightly closed, her teeth firmly set. In her hand she clutched the letter, now all crumpled and crushed in her convulsive clasp.

"My darling," I murmured, hardly knowing what to do in my anxiety. "Open your eyes, my precious one. Look up. It is I, Lorraine, your husband."

A faint sigh and the beautiful eyes unclosed and stared up at me. The white lips slowly regained their color as the blood rushed into them. I raised her head upon my knee, her long, black hair becoming loosened as I did so, and falling in luxuriant masses to the floor.

"You feel better now?" I cried.

The beautiful eyes slowly filled with tears, the swelling bust rose and fell, and from the parted lips came the cry, pitiful, agonizing, a cry that went to my heart and remained there:

"He loved me, and for my sake has left home and friends. Oh, Ralph, why did you not tell me before it was too late? Why did you keep it from me?"

I felt my brain reeling. A blur came before my eyes. My heart seemed to rise in my throat. In that one brief moment, from that one agonized cry from my half-unconscious wife, I learned the truth. It flashed upon my mind like the vivid lightning!

She loved my brother, even as he loved her!

She had loved him when she married me.

A groan escaped my lips. I could not repress it. Upon my heart fell a dark shadow, the surrounding objects became indistinct and I became unconscious!



## CHAPTER XX.

## DARKNESS.

Upon returning to life and consciousness I found my wife bending over me, her face pale and distressed, her long, glossy hair hanging in disorder about her.

"Thank heaven! he has recovered," I heard her murmur.

At first I wondered to find myself lying upon the floor, my shirt loosened at the neck, the white, frightened face of Ethel bending over me. But in one moment it all returned to me—her words, her actions—and I closed my eyes, half wishing that God would remove me from it all, let me die. The pain at my heart distressed me so; my brain throbbed and ached so terribly.

"Lorraine, open your eyes. You frighten me!" I heard her cry.

I mechanically raised my hand and passed it over my burning eyes. I felt that it would relieve me if the tears would come. But no! My eyes remained dry and tearless, although my heart was filled with sorrow even to the bursting of it, it seemed to me.

I slowly arose to my feet, she standing, gazing at me, her hands clasped, alarm and fear depicted upon her white face.

"You are better?" she murmured.

I sank into the depths of an arm chair and struggled



to compose myself before replying. Then I said, without looking at her:

"Yes, I am better."

She came to me and knelt by my side.

"You are ill, dear husband. You never fainted before."

I made no immediate reply. I could not. I felt that she was ignorant of having spoken those words; did not know that she had struck the blow that had robbed me of consciousness and happiness in one brief moment. Recovering from her unconscious state, the words that dwelt in her heart had burst from her lips without her knowledge.

I determined to keep them from her. I would not reproach her. She was my wife and I felt it my duty to bring only happiness to her heart.

"I am weak," I murmured, taking her hand. "I must not study so hard."

My eyes roved aimlessly about the room, finally resting upon the crumpled letter—Ralph's letter, which lay upon the floor.

She observed the glance and averted her eyes.

"You have read it?" I said gently.

She bowed her head.

"You know now why Ralph has separated himself from us?"

"Yes; I know all now," still averting her face, speaking in a low tone.

"You know now why he wished it kept from you—he did not wish to grieve you?"

"Yes, yes, I know," removing her hand from mine and nervously clasping it with the other.

I saw that she was distressed. I felt weary, heartsore. I deemed it best to bring this painful interview to a close; so, rising slowly to my feet, she following my example, I said, resting one hand upon her shoulder:



"Then we will say no more about it, dear. We will not be able to forget it, I know; but we will never renew this painful subject. God will protect our brother and guide his footsteps aright. He knows what is best for us all, and unto his better judgment and protecting care we will leave our future."

The tears came to her eyes. I kissed them away and left her, going to my study.

The evening shades were slowly gathering. Already the gloom of coming night darkened the room, rendering the surrounding objects indistinct and vague. Lighting my lamp I sank into my favorite easy chair and gave myself up to my bitter thoughts.

My wife loved my brother! A bitter pang contracted my heart, as this fact struck upon the chords of memory. She had ever loved him. This I firmly believed now. I had been blind not to have observed it before. Her strange hesitation when I had asked her to become my wife, her hysterical sobs and frequent spells of melancholy, all returned to me with convincing force. She loved him, and if he had but plucked up sufficient courage to have told her of his passion she would now be his wife, instead of mine. Why had he not done so? I could not answer the question that came to my mind. Why had she married me, loving him? I arose and paced the floor, my mind beset with thoughts which I could not answer, my heart throbbing dully with a sense of pain which I could scarcely control.

"God give me strength to bear it all," I muttered, falling upon my knees. For an hour I remained there in earnest communion with my Master, crying aloud at times to the God whose servant I was. I felt better when I arose to my feet. Earnest prayer accomplishes much. A faint



tap upon my door reached my ears. I opened it. My wife stood upon the threshold. How pale she looked. She had been weeping.

"Come in, dear," I murmured.

"It is growing late, Lorraine, and tea is all prepared," she said, without moving.

How could I eat? But I would make a pretense of partaking of the food her hands had prepared; so, assuming a cheerful demeanor, I said:

"Well; I must ask your forgiveness for keeping you waiting for me. I was so busy that I never once thought of tea."

Ah! I had been busy—busy wrestling with my sorrow.

I led her to the table and, seating her, assumed my accustomed place. It was but a sorry pretence of eating, for both of us. The food almost choked me, and I could see that she ate but a few mouthfuls. It was a relief to me when it was over. I know it was to her.

The tea things cleared away, I brought a book from my library and read aloud to her, as was my usual custom, until bed time. She sat opposite me, her head resting upon her hand, her eyes fixed upon the table. I know that not one word reached her ear. She listened apathetically, but heard nothing. At ten o'clock I closed the volume and kissed her good-night.

"May God bless you and grant you sweet repose," I murmured as I pressed my lips to her brow. A deep drawn sigh was her only answer.

I can recall to my mind her sad, white face, her dejected manner, her sorrowful, yearning eyes even now. Only pity for her dwelt in my heart as I saw her slowly leave the room, going to her apartment. God knows I pitied her! At that moment I would have sacrificed all that life held



dear to bring the gladsome light of happiness to her eyes, to cause merry, ringing laughter to take the place of the sighs that racked her heart.

But it was not in my power; so, extinguishing the lamp, I made my way to my apartment, there to toss and pitch the live-long night upon my couch, to arise in the early morning weary and unrefreshed. I slept none that night, and when my eyes rested upon the haggard face of my wife I felt that she had also passed the long hours in wakefulness, perhaps in distress, thinking of him.

But why linger longer with these sad memories? Enough has been told; there is yet much to relate. The days came and departed, weeks lengthened into months, until nearly a year had passed and gone. Then came a change—a change that brightened our lives, that brought a ray of sunshine to pierce the gloom and clouds that had lingered so long over our hearts. A child was born to us—a little girl!

How well I remember the feeling of pride that permeated my being, as I stood by my wife's bed side and gazed fondly into the gray, wondering eyes of the little one, and thanked God that I had been blessed with an angel's visit. With what untold affection the mother gathered the infant to her breast. I shall ever remember that scene; it is indelibly impressed upon my heart. My child! How much better could I comprehend the love of the great Father for all his children when I felt my affection for this one!

If mortal love can be so great, what must the infinite love of God be?

The child brought us closer together than we had been for many months. I saw with joy the roses return to Ethel's pale cheeks. Her liquid eyes again became in-



fused with happiness. Her voice broke forth in song once more and I was divinely happy.

The months passed by. Happy days, in which I lived a new existence! Then there came another change. A strange melancholy took possession of my darling. I puzzled my brain for an explanation, hesitating to ask her. Could it be that she was again thinking of him? For weeks I watched her anxiously, exercising great caution lest she should discover my anxiety. She grew capricious—as changeable as the moods of Dame Nature in early spring.

One day, apparently happy, the next sad and tearful. What had occurred to bring about this change? I could not comprehend it. Such conduct was entirely foreign to her natural disposition. She had never, even in early childhood, been capricious.

I gave up trying to explain the matter, trusting to time to overcome it.

Our child (to whom we had given the name of Rachel) had reached the age of four months when the time for the annual conference came about. It was to be held in Philadelphia, and was to last four days. Of course, it would be necessary for me to attend.

"I will take Ethel and the baby with me," I thought. "The change will do them both good."

I sought my wife and informed her of my plan. To my great surprise and sorrow she objected to accompanying me.

"But why do you not wish to attend?" I questioned her.

"The weather is so changeable. Baby might contract cold," she replied.

I reasoned with her, tried to show her that her fears upon that score were groundless, but all without effect. She did not wish to go, and I could not move her. So, pack-



ing my valise, I bade them both farewell, and took the train for Philadelphia, praying God to watch over them during my enforced absence.

There was much business to attend to, many changes to make, and the conference extended two days over the usual time. Beginning on Monday, it was not until Saturday that it was over, and I was free to return home. The train left the city at a late hour, somewhere between eleven and twelve o'clock at night. I could not possibly reach home before daylight. Several of my colleagues pressed me to remain with them over the Sabbath, but I was eager and anxious to return to my wife and child, and my congregation would expect me to preach for them on the morrow. So, thanking them all kindly, I hurried to the depot, arriving but a few minutes before train time. I managed to catch a few winks of sleep as the train rushed along, but they afforded but little rest, and it was with a feeling of thankfulness that I heard the brakeman call out the name of the station nearest my home. I alighted from the train in the gray light of early morning and started briskly toward my residence.

A walk of thirty minutes brought me to the gate. The sun was just making his appearance from behind the hills, looking bright and cheerful, bringing life and gladness to the earth as I opened the gate and approached the house.

All was silent within as I inserted my key in the lock and opened the door.

"They are both sleeping soundly," I muttered, crossing the room softly. "I will not awaken them. Let them sleep. Sweet repose is a blessing, and babies are cross when they are awakened out of a sound sleep."

But I could not resist the temptation to open the door and gaze upon them sleeping innocently together. So,



approaching the room occupied by my wife, I cautiously turned the knob of the door and opened it.

It was empty!

My heart rose in my throat.

"Pshaw," I muttered, repressing the feeling which the sight of the unoccupied bed had aroused, "Ethel has used my room during my absence. It is upon the south side of the house and warmer than her own."

So, noiselessly closing the door, I made my way to my own apartment.

Like the other, it was empty and desolate!

I staggered back, clutching at the knob of the door.

"Where can she be?" I muttered, hoarsely. "What can this mean?"

An overpowering conviction that all was not right swept over me. I could feel my heart beating violently, my blood curdling with horror. Madly I rushed through the deserted rooms, with eager haste, aroused by the thought that she might be taking an early morning walk. I searched the grounds, even running wildly, hatless, some distance along the road in either direction. Without result! Neither my wife nor child was to be seen.

I re-entered the house, nearly distraught with sickening terror. As I passed the kitchen door I saw my face in the large, old-fashioned looking-glass that hung on the wall beside it. I recoiled in fright from the reflection of my own countenance. I looked like a wild man. My hair was in disorder, my coat thrown open, my collar and cravat disarranged, while my eyes seemed fit to burst from their sockets. I shuddered and turned from the sight, and once more crossed the room and entered my wife's deserted apartment. As I turned the knob I glanced involuntarily at the little clock upon the mantel. I saw



that it had run down. Its busy little pendulum was hanging motionless in the case. It was an eight-day clock. I had wound it up myself the Saturday before leaving home. Either Ethel or myself had always attended to this each Saturday. The clock had not been wound the previous day. My wife had neglected this duty.

Upon my mind was forced the conviction that she had not been in the house the day before, that she had not been at home.

Where could she have been? Where could she be now?

With this awful thought surging through my brain, with the answer trying to force itself upon my mind, the terrible reply, "She has left her home," I rushed madly into her chamber. How peaceful it looked. The bed, white and untouched, the simple womanly adornments, not much in themselves, but the beautifiers of home when touched by a woman's delicate hand, made the spot appear almost a holy one to me. Yet she was not there. The shrine was before me, but the idol had departed.

I sank into her low rocking chair, the chair she had often used when at nightfall she had rocked our little one to sleep. Dropping my head into my clasped hands, I burst into tears, the cry of conviction ringing in my ears: "She has left her home! She has left her home!"

I sprang to my feet, dashing the tears from my eyes.

"Left her home!" I cried aloud in answer to the accusation of my soul. "Why has she left her home? Why should she do this? Have I not been kind to her—a loving true husband?"

In reply came a repetition of the taunting cry. It maddened me. I tore down the bed clothing, scarcely knowing what I was doing, perhaps vainly, madly hoping that she was concealed beneath them. I turned to the dress-







ing case, stared at myself in dumb amazement as again the mirror reflected my face.

"Why should she do such a thing?" I continued to mutter.

"Gone! my wife, my child—gone from me without explanation, without cause!"

I laughed aloud—the blood-curdling laugh of coming madness. I tore open the drawers in the bureau. Ah! a letter, and addressed to me in her handwriting. Perhaps this was the explanation, would tell me why my home was left deserted—desolate. The envelope was not sealed. I removed the inclosed sheet and with trembling hands spread it out before me upon the dressing case. I have that letter in my possession now. Often have I read the lines over and over, often dumbly wondered how she, my wife, could have written them. I copy the cruel words:

"Lorraine—When you read this I shall be far away from you. You will say, 'Why have you taken this step?' The answer, though it may break your heart, I must give. I do not love you! Let that suffice. You once told me that God ruled the hearts of all, that everything happens for the best. Then, that God has ruled my heart against you. My departure will prove for the best for you. Oh, you cannot know what it is to drag out an existence where love has no place in the heart. I have vainly striven to do my duty. I have tried to overcome the feeling which has been oppressing me for so long. Useless! I have not been able to accomplish it. When our child was born my heart went out to you. I felt for you the love of a wife because you were her father, but as the days passed that feeling grew less apparent, and at last disappeared entirely. I have been considering this step for many weeks. It was only when you left me that I determined upon it.



I shall take our child with me. She is of my sex. I am best capable of caring for her. I almost hesitate when I think of the sorrow, the despair that my action will bring to your heart, for you have ever been kind and good to me, Lorraine, but it must be. Forget me! Drive my image from your heart. I am but a woman! I have not your strength of mind or character.

"Do not search for me. I cannot tell you where I am going. I hope you will never discover me.

"Farewell!

ETHEL."

With a wild cry I threw the letter from me. I paced the floor like a madman, biting my lips until they bled. In my heart came an overpowering feeling of rage. I had never experienced such a sensation before. It shocked me. I tried to drive it from me, but it refused to be quieted.

"She does not love me," I cried, gnashing my teeth. "She has taken my child, and she says God has ruled her heart! Base woman, thus to bruise my heart! Perfidious wretch, to crush my soul, to almost shake my faith in my Maker!"

Like one bereft of reason I rushed madly through the house, overturning chairs, as they opposed me, tearing the table cloth from the table, and casting it from me. I felt that I was going mad. I prayed God that it might be so.

"But I will find her," I cried, standing before the flower stand, where the geraniums were blooming. "I will find her! Not to beseech her to return, but to force from her my child. She is of my blood. She will love her father. But where has she gone?"

I looked about me as if for an answer. Where could she have gone? She had no money, unless (and the thought filled my heart with fresh rage) she has taken my money from the desk in my study. I strode rapidly toward the



door and threw it open. Yes; the desk was unlocked, the private drawer, where I kept my money, open. The money gone! She had not drawn upon her own money in bank. That might have created talk, as she had never done so before. She had left me, fled from my house and taken my money to assist her in her flight.

"Thief!" I almost shrieked, turning from the desk. As I did so my eyes fell upon the open Bible lying upon the table before me.

God's book!

A nameless terror took possession of me. I had forgotten my vows, forgotten myself! Was this the way to bear up under affliction? I fell upon my knees, my teeth chattering, my eyes filled with tears of contrition.

"Father, forgive me. O God, forgive me," I cried over and over again. In my misery I beat my head upon the floor, my hands clutching at the carpet. One of them fell upon a sheet of paper lying there. I grasped it tightly and rose to my feet. In the bright light of the sun bursting in through the open window of the adjoining apartment I glanced at the paper I held.

It was a letter! A letter in Ralph's handwriting!

"How came this here?" I gasped. I read it over. There was not much to read, but enough to turn my blood to ice, sufficient to drive me back to the verge of madness. This is what I read:

"My darling—I have struggled in vain against myself. I have prayed to God to help me. I cannot stand it longer. No answer comes to my prayers. My heart still craves for you, cries out for you. Come to me, no matter what follows! You are mine in soul. You must be mine in the flesh!

RALPH."

I felt myself turning weak and faint. I vainly essayed



to reach the bed-room near me. I felt a heavy pressure upon my brain, a dark cloud slowly settled over me. I remember gasping out my brother's name, and then knew no more. The darkness of grim despair—awful, horrible—settled down upon me.



## CHAPTER XXI

## "VENGEANCE IS MINE."

"There, he is coming to," I heard a familiar voice say. I opened my eyes. They rested upon the face of the village doctor. Glancing about the room, I could see that quite a crowd of my neighbors had assembled, curiosity, wonder, pity depicted upon their several faces.

"You have had a severe nervous shock," the doctor went on to say, seeing that I was conscious. "You did not make an appearance at church, as usual, and so several of your congregation took it upon themselves to call at the house to see why you had failed to come. They found you lying upon the floor of the room adjoining in a dead faint, and so sent for me. You will be all right in a day or so, but you must remain perfectly quiet until I give you permission to get up."

I nodded my head, my eyes upon the faces of those who filled the room. It all returned to me in one brief moment. At first bewildered, my brain gradually grew clearer. I remembered my wife had gone from me, taking my child—the letter, the other one from Ralph, it all returned to me. Did these people know? Were their looks of pity for my sudden illness or compassion for my loss?

"We were surprised to find you alone," the physician went on to state. "Your wife—she is not at home."

From the tone of his voice I gathered that he knew nothing. Perchance they had none of them seen the letter.



"No; she has gone upon a visit," I muttered faintly.

"If you will give me her address I will communicate with her. It is to be regretted that she is not at home," the doctor continued.

"No; never mind. Do not alarm her. I will soon be all right," I cried hastily.

The worthy physician frowned slightly, his brows contracting.

"Some one must nurse you," he began. I interrupted him.

"No, no; it is not necessary. I have lost much rest of late. Leave me to myself. I will recover in a few hours. I need no one."

"I don't like to leave you alone," remonstrated the doctor.

"You will be conferring a favor by so doing," I broke in faintly.

"Very well; as you desire it, we will leave you. I shall visit you again later in the day. In this glass," referring to a tumbler half filled with a colorless liquid, which stood on a table near the bed, "you will find a composing draught. I would advise you to take it, and rest."

I nodded my head in reply, and closed my eyes. A few words to the members of my congregation who were present, and the doctor left the room, followed by them. I was alone!

Waiting for five minutes to assure myself of this fact, I sat erect in bed, then, throwing the coverings from me, sprang out upon the floor. I found that some one had taken off my coat and vest, but my lower habiliments had not been removed. I found my other garments lying across the foot of the bed and hastily assumed them, together with my shoes. I felt weak. I had eaten nothing



since tea the night before. Consulting my watch, I found the hour nearly one, and, strange to say, I felt ravenously hungry. The terrible shock had not deprived me of appetite at any rate. I did not feel like myself. There seemed to be in my heart an eager yearning to find my wife. I felt no love for her. My heart no longer felt bruised and sore from the wound she had inflicted, rather hard and cold as the thought of her returned to me.

I felt as though I could crush her beneath my heel!

I hated her. I yearned for vengeance. And he, my brother no longer—my blood surged to my temples, nearly suffocating me with its hot impetuosity as I recalled the words of his letter to my wife.

"I shall follow her," I muttered through my set teeth. "I shall come up with them and then let them beware! I shall have no mercy for them—they have shown none to me!"

I walked out into the dining-room. The chairs were thrown right and left, here and there, as I had cast them from me in the violence of my mad grief. The table cloth lay in a disordered heap near the table. I stooped and picked it up. As I did so I saw the letter from my false brother lying upon the floor beneath it. I understood then why the villagers had not seen it; the table covering had hidden it from their gaze. Without glancing at the words written there, I folded the letter and thrust it in the pocket of my coat; then going into the kitchen, began a search for food. I found all that I required, and, sitting at the kitchen table, I ate ravenously, tearing the cold meat in shreds with my teeth and fingers, munching it more like a wild beast than a human being. I washed it all down with a cup of pure cold water. I asked no grace. I did not call upon God to bless that meal. I felt that He had forgotten me, had turned from me.



The thoughts that dwelt in my mind, possessed my being, were not godly ones.

They were of revenge! Of retaliation upon those—once beloved, now hated. They had crushed my heart. I would crush them to earth. I would destroy them! No, frenzy actuated me. My brain was clear. I knew what I was doing. I calmly reviewed the situation and methodically arranged my plans.

I must first find Ralph! I could not call him brother. His address must be upon the letter I had found. I took it from my pocket. No address. "Ah, but the envelope," I cried. I must search for that." I arose quickly from the table, wiping my mouth upon a napkin which I found upon one of the shelves of the cupboard, and began my search. I must find it. All depended upon it; the post mark upon that would reveal to me the place where she had gone, where he dwelt. I had found the letter in the study. I might also find the envelope there. I searched it carefully, even ransacking the drawers where my own private papers were kept, but no envelope. Then I went into her room. I was not any more successful there. My brows knit in thought, wondering where it could be, I approached the window of the dining-room—that window she had so often gazed through. A glad cry escaped me. Lying near the flower stand, crushed and torn, lay a scrap of buff paper, but my heart told me it was that which I sought, and it spoke truly. It was the envelope, creased and torn, but bearing in legible characters the mark I wished to see—the post mark of the place where the letter had been mailed. I smoothed out the creases and read: "Union City, Mich." So he had gone to Michigan, many miles from me, but I would have followed if the mark had been "Hades," and the father of sin had stood guard



before the gates to keep me from entering. I was fixed in my determination. No earthly power could have stayed me.

I put the envelope carefully away and entered my study. For an hour I wrote, a letter to my lawyer, in which I informed him that I had gone upon a trip for the benefit of my health; one to my banker, instructing him to address me at Chicago with letters of credit upon some responsible banking firm at that place; a third to the bishop of my circuit, explaining my absence from duty, pleading ill-health as my excuse. These I sealed, addressed and stamped. I had just finished when I heard the outer door open, then the sound of footsteps in the adjoining room. I stepped to the door of my study and saw the doctor, a puzzled expression upon his honest countenance, just leaving my sleeping apartment.

"Ah, there you are," he grunted. "I believe I instructed you to remain in bed until I gave you permission to rise."

"I felt strong. I did not think it necessary to obey you," I replied.

He placed his finger upon my pulse.

"You are feverish," he declared. "You are acting unwisely, my dear sir."

I smiled, in spite of myself, at his professional anxiety, but informed him that I felt all right, and objected to returning to my bed. He remonstrated with me, but, seeing I was resolved to use my own judgment, ceased, wrote me a prescription, accepted the money I offered him as payment for his services, and left me.

The sun was setting in the west as, valise in hand, I turned the key in the lock of the outer door of my cottage and walked slowly toward the gate. A pang of regret that I must thus turn my back upon that home, where



I had been so happy, struck upon my heart, and a sigh welled up from my breast as I turned in the road, and looked my last farewell upon the vine-covered cottage, but I compressed my lips and overcame the feeling. Happiness had gone from me forever. I must now live for vengeance. The glorious orb of day had been rising from the hills when I had first seen my home that morning, the same bright king of the heavens was sinking to rest in the west as I turned my back upon it. Happiness had dwelt in my heart at his rising. Grim despair, hatred, had driven out the peace and left misery, unhappiness, to cast its shadows o'er my life, as the clouds of darkness must soon o'ershadow the earth, made glad by his presence, when his radiant face sank from sight behind the western hills, to be seen no more until another day had come.

That night I occupied a berth in a sleeping car en route to Detroit. I had begun my search for revenge.

All the next day and the following night I rode; at twenty minutes past three on the second day I arrived at my destination. I had been obliged to change cars twice, once at Detroit, once at Jackson, Mich., Union City being on a branch road.

I refused to allow myself to be conveyed to either of the hotels in the little town. I must first inquire of the station agent if Ralph really made this place his home or if he had merely mailed the letter there, living elsewhere.

The crowd had departed and I was alone upon the platform, when I approached the agent.

"Excuse me, sir. Is there a gentleman residing here or in the neighborhood by the name of Dean, Ralph Dean?" I inquired.

The man pursed his lips, hesitated a moment and then replied:



"Not that I know of, sir. Can you describe him to me?"

I gave an accurate description of my half brother.

"What did you say his name was?" he asked curiously.

"Ralph Dean?"

"There is no one by that name living here, but there is a man answering your description living in that house over yonder," indicating a large frame house, painted white, about one-fourth of a mile distant.

"What is the name of the man who occupies that house?" I inquired, my heart beating eagerly.

"Royce Dane," he replied.

"It must be the same," my heart told me. Yes; the initials were the same. It must be him. I thanked the man and turned to leave the station, when he vouchsafed further information, information that fell as a blow upon me, and convinced me that Royce Dane and Ralph Dean were one and the same.

"He has been living here for a year or more. Every one thought him a single man, until two days ago a lady with a little baby came in on the evening train and inquired for him. She was his wife."

I seized his arm and clutched it tightly. So fierce was my grip that the fellow winced.

"His wife?" I hoarsely cried.

"Yes, his wife. You are pinching me pretty tight, mister."

I released him.

"Pardon me, sir," I murmured. "I was not aware that I was grasping your arm so tightly. But tell me, did she, this woman, his wife, you say—did she ask for Royce Dane?"

"Of course, she did. Who else should she have asked for?"



"True." I turned away. She then knew of his assumed name. The letter I had found had not been the first. He had written her before. Ah! it all came to me. It must have been the receipt of a letter from him (possibly the first one) that had wrought the change in her so soon after the birth of our child. She had possibly driven him from her mind until that letter had reached her, to rekindle the smoldering flame, to cause it to burst forth with renewed vigor. Yes, that must have been it. It seemed plain to me now.

I heard the voice of the station agent behind me.

"Say," he cried; "if I ain't asking too much—is this man the one you are looking for?"

"No," I replied. He looked at me curiously, and entered the station.

I walked slowly toward the town, keeping off the principal streets as much as possible. I feared meeting him before my allotted time. Night must come before I made my visit to his house. All deeds of darkness are done under the friendly cover of night. I reached the hotel without being noticed by any one particularly. There was nothing peculiar in my personal appearance. I had put aside my clerical dress, assuming a plain costume of gray tweed. I did not wish to attract attention. I wished to be as were other people. I felt that my heart those days was blacker than any of them; yet I considered myself in the right. I was but an instrument of justice, righting my own wrongs.

The hours dragged themselves slowly along. Time seemed to fly upon leaden wings, but night came at last. The sun disappeared from sight behind the trees of a neighboring forest. The shadows slowly gathered, darkness fell upon the earth. From a distant marsh came



the harsh croaking of a multitude of frogs, the insects of the night adding their chirping and twittering to the chorus. I left the hotel by a side door. No one saw me. I intended to return there and sleep that night after it was all over. I felt that I could rest in peace, with my vengeance fulfilled, my deed of justice accomplished. I gave no thought to the consequences that must follow. I cared not what became of me when it was all over.

With a quick, nervous step I hurried along the deserted road leading to the station. Arriving there I sprang over a fence and crossed a field in the direction of the white house, the residence of Royce Dane, as the station agent had informed me. All was silent as I threw open the gate and stealthily approached the house. There were no dogs, nothing to warn them that the avenger was upon them! The only sign of life about the place was the subdued light of a lamp penetrating through the heavy curtains, which protected the windows of a room upon the ground floor to the right of the principal entrance, the door that was reached by the path leading from the gate.

"They are there together," I muttered, creeping toward the window nearest the door. From within I could hear the sound of voices. I listened eagerly for some minutes, and then, faint, pitiful, reaching my heart, came an infant's wail.

"My child," I gasped, falling back from the window; "my own darling, so near me and yet so far from me!"

But I could not remain longer idle. I had much to accomplish. My breath came short and hard, as I thought of what I had come to do. I crawled toward the door. I turned the knob.

It gave to my touch. It was not locked. I entered the hall. "Surely Providence is on my side," I murmured.



Stealthily I approached the door of the room, the only obstacle between us. Through the key-hole I could see the light shining, casting one bright ray of brilliancy out into the darkness. The murmur of voices reached my ears—a deep, heavy masculine tone, which I recognized at once; then the soft murmur of a woman's voice. Hesitating no longer, I boldly crossed the intervening space and threw open the door!

They were before me!

They were sitting side by side, the cradle, in which slept my little one, near them.

I stood for one moment in the doorway, with the bright light shining full upon me; then, taking three strides, that brought me to the center of the room, I halted and fixed my eyes upon them.

With a wild cry of terror the woman arose to her feet and cast herself upon her knees before me, while he, the one I had loved, the brother, false at heart as he was fair of face, sat as if spell-bound.

"So I have found you!" I cried hoarsely, my voice sounding strange and unreal. "I have found you!"

"Lorraine, my husband," she wailed, clasping me about the knees, "hear me. I can explain."

I roughly threw her from me.

"Do not dare to touch me, thou accursed one! Turn your fair, false face to the dust! Humble yourself before God as you do before me, your injured husband, and pray to Him for the forgiveness which I cannot grant! And you, my brother! Thank God, my father was not your father. My mother's blood flows in your veins, but my father's manly spirit forms no part of you! I came here to wreak a terrible vengeance upon you both! Do you wish to hear me? Shall I tell you what I am going to do?"







I am going to take from you the life which you know so little how to use! I am going to send your guilty souls before that God who gave you that life and who now claims it! Do you hear me? I am going to kill you!"

Rising to her feet, her raven hair flowing back over her shoulders, the woman recoiled from me. Then, seeing the fiendish glare in my eyes, she gave vent to a succession of piercing screams. I sprang upon her, the devil in me urging me on.

"Cease those screams," I harshly commanded.

At that moment I felt myself seized from behind. He had aroused himself and sought to overpower me.

"Release me!" I commanded. "Curse you, release me!"

"Lorraine, you are mad. I know we have wronged you, but do not attempt to stain your hands with the blood of your wife. She is the mother of your child!"

His words goaded me to wild delirium. I tore myself from his detaining clasp. I uttered curses upon them both. Oh, God forgive me for that terrible night's work! I seized my wretched wife by her beautiful hair and attempted to take her life. Already had I drawn from its scabbard a keen dagger, when Ralph, with a cry of horror, sprang upon me and bore me to the floor. Like two wild beasts we struggled, overturning the table upon which the lamp stood, breaking it and causing the oil to ignite. Soon the carpet was in one light blaze. I saw it creeping upon us. Still I fought for the mastery! At last my fingers clutched his throat. With all the strength of which I was possessed I compressed them. I saw him growing purple in the face, felt his struggles grow less, until, with a gasp, he ceased to writhe and fell back helpless. I was free! I turned to look for her. She was lying, insensible, perhaps lifeless, but a few steps from me,



the fire eagerly creeping toward her. Breathless I stood and gazed upon them both. Those who had wronged me—helpless before me!

“Vengeance is mine!” I shouted. Then a fiend seemed to take possession of me. I abused their helpless forms, heaping curses upon them, hurling the most opprobrious epithets at them. Suddenly a severe pang, a piercing pain choked me. My throat felt as if it was burning. I staggered back to the wall, clutching at my collar, to relieve me of the horrible sensation. I attempted to cry out.

My God! my tongue refused to articulate!

Again and again I essayed to speak. Only a succession of guttural sounds emanated from my parched and burning throat. Filled with horror, gasping and clutching at my throat, I staggered toward the door, the flames licking up the carpet behind me. A faint wail from the cradle struck upon my ears.

My child! I could not leave her to perish. With frantic haste I returned to the cradle. Already the blankets which covered her were igniting. I tore the little one from her resting place, stamped out the fire that would soon have ended her life, and, wrapping her securely in one of the blankets, rushed from the room, leaving them behind me to die, to be consumed in the eager, lurid flames sweeping down upon them with devilish haste!

Out into the peaceful night I fled, on across the fields, never stopping to look behind me, fleeing as if pursued by all the demons of the infernal regions.



## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE PASSING WEEKS.

For many hours I struggled along, the faint gleam of the new moon lighting but imperfectly my path. Stumbling and falling, through mud and mire, swamp, woodland and meadow, I pursued my way, never once relaxing my frantic hold upon the child, who, sleeping through it all (for she had subsided into slumber almost as soon as I had lifted her from the cradle), gave me no trouble.

Once I looked back over my shoulder. The heavens were lit up with the reflection of the burning house—the house of shame, the funeral pyre of those two, who must now be ashes, their beauty obliterated by the devouring flames.

I felt no pang of remorse or sorrow. I felt that it was but right! My only feeling was that of desire to leave the dread spot far behind me. So, wet and muddy, my clothing torn from contact with briars and brush, my flesh cut and bruised, feeling the fever in my head and throat growing in fierce intensity, I stumbled along, until—gladsome sight—I beheld a faint light in the distance. Almost at the same moment my foot came in contact with some immovable object and, glancing down, I saw that I had come upon the road bed of a railway. My foot had struck the track! Thinking to make more rapid progress, the walking being better upon the railway than in the fields, I turned to my right and proceeded in the direction of the



light, pressing the child closer to my breast, rapidly continuing my flight. On, until the light grew brighter, and I saw that I was approaching a station. The light was a switch signal, and was but a short distance from the depot.

In a few moments I had reached the house. It was deserted, and the doors of the waiting rooms were locked, but a baggage truck stood outside, and upon this I laid the child, and seated myself to rest. I could not have proceeded much farther. I must have walked at least ten miles, and was nearly exhausted. A glance at my watch in the moonlight informed me that the hour lacked but a few minutes of three o'clock. In two hours it would be light. I determined to rest an hour, and then continue on my way. Perhaps a train might pass during that time and I could board it, and soon be far away. But I was doomed to suffer disappointment. No train passed the lonely station, and so, as the clocks in the neighboring village tolled out the hour of four, I again gathered the sleeping infant to my breast, and started wearily along the hard road bed of the railway, on, I knew not where. As I passed the station I glanced up at the sign-board, which bore the name of the town for which this was the depot. It was Homer! The name of the Greek philosopher caused my thoughts to wander back to my college days. How happy I had been when Homer had been my only anxiety! How I wished that those days could return once more, and I, a happy boy at college, my heart bursting with ambition, my mind fixed upon making for myself a name among men.

But it had all passed. Those days were gone, and I, a wanderer upon the face of the earth, a murderer, even if I had been driven to it by treachery and deceit.



"Oh God! Thou art my creator. Be lenient with Thy servant," I mentally cried, my voice refusing to do my bidding.

I was recalled to myself by the weak voice of my child. She had awakened and was crying faintly. Poor little thing! Hunger perhaps had caused the puny wail. I must in some way provide food for her. Would it not have been best to have left her to die? What could the future bring to her but sorrow and shame!

The gray dawn came at last. The surrounding objects grew less vague, more distinct. Upon either side of the track I could see at intervals the houses of men, the peaceful, happy homes of honest men, tillers of the soil. I must apply to some one of them for food, my child must be fed and my own hunger satisfied.

Turning from the railway at last, I scrambled with some difficulty to the top of an embankment, and struck across the fields, wet with dew, in the direction of a farm house not far off.

A young girl, engaged in milking, turned and looked at me with a startled expression in her eyes as I approached the barn. I smiled wearily and attempted to explain to her my wishes. With horror I found my voice still hushed. I could not speak!

Would this last forever? was the thought that flashed through my mind—was this my punishment?

The girl had risen from the stool upon which she had been seated and was staring at me in wondering amazement. A look of alarm gradually took its place, and she started as if to leave me. Taking a memorandum book and pencil from my pocket, I wrote upon one of the leaves that both myself and the child were suffering from fatigue and hunger and beseeched her to obtain food for



us if possible. She took the book and read what I had written and then, looking up in my face with an expression of compassion, motioned for me to follow her and led the way toward the house but a stone's throw from the barn. A bearded man, roughly clad, but with an honest face, met us at the door. To him the girl spoke:

"Oh, father," she murmured, pity in her young voice, "here is a poor deaf and dumb man and he has a little baby. He said he was hungry. Can't we give him some breakfast and feed the baby?"

"How on earth could he say he was hungry if he is deaf and dumb?" cried the father.

I smiled in spite of my fatigued and exhausted condition and indicated that I could hear, but could not speak, and, tapping upon my little book, conveyed to him the manner I had adopted to inform my little friend of my hunger.

"Too bad," he commented when I had finished. "Where did you come from?" I indicated by a sweep of my hand, some far off place.

"Hum. And this baby—yours?"

I bowed.

"Wife dead?" slightly suspiciously.

I averted my eyes and bowed again. The little one was now crying lustily, and was wide awake. I wrote upon the book that if he would give us food that I would pay him and then explain more fully why I was there and where I was going.

"Of course!" he exclaimed, after reading. "You shall have some breakfast. I don't know as it's necessary to explain anything. 'Tain't none of my business. Looks kinder funny to see a man goin' 'round the country with a little baby, but you don't look like a kidnapper, and if



you say it's all right, why, I'll believe you. Come into the house and I'll introduce you to the ole woman."

I thanked him with my eyes and followed him into the house. His wife (a motherly soul!) made us welcome. One of her daughters was nursing a fine, healthy boy of about the same age as my little one, and she willingly took the crying infant and satisfied its hunger. Breakfast was over, but the wife prepared a meal for me, and after I was through insisted upon my resting. I accepted the proffered hospitality. I needed rest sorely, and so followed the farmer to a homely but comfortably furnished room just off the kitchen, where I had eaten. Pointing to a bed, covered with a counterpane of spotless purity, which filled one side of the apartment, my host remarked:

"My darter's bed. But she ain't got no objection to your occupyin' it. So jump in an' take a good snooze an' ye'll feel better. We'll look after the baby."

Again I thanked him mutely and when he had gone began disrobing. What a relief it was to me to remove my clothing. How thankful I felt that I had fallen among such friends.

Seated upon the edge of the bed, I stooped to untie my shoes. Immediately opposite me, hanging suspended over the plain wash stand, was a square, old-fashioned mirror. As I straightened up, after removing my shoes, I caught the reflection of my head and shoulders in the glass. Spell-bound I gazed. If my tongue could have done my bidding I should have cried aloud in horror; for my brow, unmarked by time, smooth and unwrinkled but a few short hours before, was now deeply seamed, Deep lines extending from the corners of my mouth gave me the appearance of a man of sixty, while my hair, once black, was now as white as the Alpine snows. What a



change that night had made! Stricken dumb! prematurely aged! an outcast upon the face of the earth!

I threw myself upon the bed and sobbed bitterly. I prayed God that I might die. Earnestly I besought my Master to remove from me the memory of it all. But He heeded not my prayer. I must linger on and suffer through the years to come. He permitted me to live. Nay, forced life upon me, perhaps for the sake of my little one. I had not thought of her in my wild desire to die. No, better that I should live on, even to suffer, for her sweet sake.

I mechanically arose and finished disrobing, and then, sad at heart, burning with fever, crept between the clean sheets and slept!

Dreamless slumber brought forgetfulness.

I awoke with a racking pain in my head, my temples throbbed, my mouth and throat felt parched and burning. Upon attempting to move I found it next to impossible to do so.

"Am I about to be ill?" I thought in terror, now desiring life as eagerly as I had prayed the night before to have it taken from me. "What will become of me, my child! I must shake off this feeling." But each fresh effort but gave me greater distress, and, trembling from weakness, I fell back upon the bed helpless. The door opened at that moment and my kind host made his appearance. Seeing me awake, my eyes staring at him, he said:

"I was just comin' to wake you. Night is coming on, and you know this is my daughter's room. I don't want to turn you out. I can give you another bed." At that moment, approaching the bed, he must have observed something strange in my appearance, for he cried: "My Lord, man! You're goin' to be sick! Your eyes are wild and delirious. You are burning up with fever. Don't try



to move! You'll stay in that bed until you're well. Sallie can sleep with her mother. Stay right where you are. I'll go for the doctor," and without waiting to say more he rushed precipitately out of the room.

I lay and stared at the ceiling, feeling the fever gradually possessing me. Strange faces and forms appeared upon the walls. Grinning creatures stared at me from behind the mirror, crouching at the foot of the bed. I realized that they were but the phantasies of a mind disordered, knew that they but came to warn me that soon raging delirium would take possession of my mind. I remember thinking "So be it," and then sank into unconsciousness.

The three weeks that followed were a blank. They told me upon my recovery that I had come very near death's door, but careful nursing and skillful treatment at the hands of the local physician brought me through, and one bright day in July I was permitted to rise from my bed, and sit by the window to gaze upon the fields ripe with golden grain, to watch the cows grazing peacefully in the meadows beyond. I rapidly gained in strength. One week from the day the doctor informed me I might risk getting out of bed I felt as strong as ever. I felt that I must now be leaving my kind friends. I could not bring myself to longer impose upon their hospitality. But one thing worried me. My child! For hours I would sit, looking out of the window, hearing the lowing of the cattle, the song of the harvesters, broken into by the roar of a passing train at intervals, and puzzle my mind as to the best plan to pursue concerning this one, my only one of the kind upon earth. Suddenly, one day, an inspired thought came to me.

Why could I not leave her here with these honest, kindly people? With them she would grow up in peace



and happiness, surrounded by the beauties of God's handiwork, knowing naught of the cruel, wicked world. I could send money for her support from time to time, and at intervals visit her.

The more I thought of this the more favorable did it appear to me, and so one day I broached the subject to the farmer, John Adler by name. I informed him through the medium of paper and pencil that my wife was dead, that I had missed the train at Homer the night preceding the morning I had first made my appearance, and had started to walk to Hillsdale in order to catch the early morning train, and had taken the wrong road. I stated that I had no relations with whom to leave the child, and if he would take her into his family circle, consider her as one of his own, that he should be amply rewarded.

He hesitated some, held a lengthy consultation with his wife and finally agreed to do as I desired.

"Bring her up as your own," I wrote. "Her name is Rachel. Give her your own name of Adler. I have my reasons for asking this of you. Nothing dishonorable, but which I cannot explain now. I will pay you what you think best."

After some hesitation he agreed. It was arranged that I was to pay him the sum of five hundred dollars annually until the child had reached the age of twelve years, when an additional sum of three hundred dollars yearly was to be paid. I agreed to his terms, thankful that a home had been provided for my little one.

I had not made any inquiry concerning the fire at Union City. I naturally supposed that they had heard of it, but as none of the family mentioned the circumstance I almost feared to broach the subject.

But upon the morning of my departure, as we were



seated at the table, I wrote upon my tablet these words:

"As I was waiting for the train at Homer before I learned that I could not catch one until late the following day I observed a bright glare in the heavens. Has there been an extensive conflagration near here lately?"

"Yes; a big fire at Union City," replied Adler.

"A factory or residence?" I wrote.

"A house belonging to a Mr. Dane. It caught about ten o'clock at night and burned to the ground before any one could reach it."

"Was any one injured?"

"Mr. Dane, his wife and little baby were burned up in the house. At least, so everybody says, as none of 'em have been seen since."

So they had been consumed!

"Another thing," my host continued. "The man at the station said that a stranger, a middle-aged man, had come in on the afternoon train and had asked him some questions about a man whose name sounded very much like Mr. Dane's, and who he believed was the same. This stranger went to the hotel, eat his supper, and went out for a walk. He never came back. The station agent declares that the stranger went to Mr. Dane's house that night, in some way was responsible for the fire and was burned up with the others. Anyhow, he was never seen again, and his valise is still at the hotel. They found out his name when they opened the valise. He didn't register. It was a strange name—Lorraine Herschel. Did you ever hear it?"

I shook my head and averted my eyes. I made no further comment, but finished my breakfast.

So I was supposed to be dead! In all probabilities the newspapers had published the fact, and it had been copied



into the papers at home. Be it so. I had no reason to wish it otherwise.

I arose from the table and an hour later pressed a fifty dollar bill into John Adler's hand and made ready to leave that peaceful home.

"I'll just credit you with this on account," remarked Adler. "I suppose you want a receipt. What name, sir?"

I had not up to that time given any name. He had not asked for it. I had not thought of it.

I smiled, reading him, understanding why he asked the question.

Taking my tablet, I wrote the first name that came to my mind—"Henry Allen," the name I have borne ever since.

Then, without waiting for the receipt, I stooped and kissed my child—a long farewell, and left the house, going out into the world, a new man, bearing a new name, to seek new life.

Lorraine Herschel was dead!

Henry Allen lived!



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

I went directly to Chicago and registered at the Tremont house. I had not fully made up my mind to what business I would turn my attention. I could not preach. I felt that I would never speak again, and to my mind came the conviction that never again could I feel as I had felt in the days gone by. No holy thoughts possessed me now. I shuddered at times as I realized the terrible power of God's anger. I dreaded that, but his tender love I doubted. Had he not permitted me to suffer?

I could not teach; but one field was left to me—I could write. Later on I might turn my attention to that; at present I felt no inclination to do anything but brood over my terrible experiences.

The days passed monotonously. In the mornings I read the papers, burying myself in them until dinner; the afternoons were passed in walking the streets, gazing in at the store windows or sitting in my room, thinking—brooding.

I retired early. Only in sleep could I forget, and sometimes not even then, for dreams came to me occasionally, always of my happy past, before the clouds came, before the blow fell upon me. I would see her face in my slumbers, always smiling, ever lovely, felt her kisses upon my brow and, waking—realizing that only a dream had come to mock me—cursed her in my heart. Why could I not



forget her? Why did the memories of those days haunt me?

I began to frequent the theaters at last. I had never been an amusement seeker in the olden times; I had believed such things frivolous and detractive from my holy calling; but now they afforded me pleasure, a relief from thought. While witnessing the representations of mimic trouble upon the stage, I forgot for the time my own, and when the play had ended wished that it could have continued forever, that I might be kept from myself! And so the weeks passed by, until I had been in the city one month. Strange to say, I had never given my fortune a thought. I had been in possession of nearly \$5,000 when I had left home, having a check in my pocket-book for that amount, and upon reaching Philadelphia had gone to the bank and had it cashed. So I was not destitute, had no need of ready cash. I did not realize until the month had passed, that, being supposed dead, my earthly possessions were lost to me; that I could not lay claim to one cent of the money left me by Uncle Ralph, or in any way receive benefit from my property, unless I came forth from my hiding place and proclaimed to the world that I was still in the land of the living.

When this thought flashed through my mind I was sitting by the table in my apartment reading. I had just come from the theater, where I had witnessed a play, where a man, supposed to be dead, returns and claims his wife (who has married again) and property. It had made a decided impression upon my mind, and I had been thinking of it, even while reading, when the fact occurred to me that I was placed much in the same position as the hero of the play. I threw the paper from me and, rising, paced the floor.



For nearly an hour I walked and pondered. There was but one way open before me, and that was to resurrect Lorraine Herschel, and consign Henry Allen to the silent tomb. Could I do this? I could not make up my mind. Into whose hands would my money and property fall? There were no heirs. My will, in the hands of my lawyers, left everything to my wife; but she was dead—my child lived. The thought came to me like a flash. She could inherit. But then again, how could I prove my little one's right to this money, without disclosing my identity? The infant was also supposed to be dead, had been reported to have perished in the flames with her mother, had been consumed with us all. If I came forward as Henry Allen I should be compelled to explain how I came in possession of the facts, and when brought face to face with those who had known me, although greatly changed, I might be recognized.

No; I realized that this idea was impracticable. I must either return to life or sacrifice my fortune. Sorely perplexed, I took up the paper once more and glanced absently at the printed columns. I had not read the papers that morning, as had been my usual custom; I had not been feeling well, so had taken a long walk along the lake front, reserving my reading until later in the day. Suddenly my eye caught the bold heading of an article upon the front page. It was a peculiar one, and attracted me. Sitting down, I read it:

“RETURNED FROM THE DEAD.

“The Strange Case of One Supposed to Have Perished—  
A Miraculous Escape.”

“Nearly two months ago we published the account of the burning of the residence of Mr. Royce Dane, a wealthy and esteemed citizen of Union City, Mich. At that time,



and even up to the present, it was supposed that Mr. Dane, his wife and infant child perished in the flames. It was also reported that a stranger, who had arrived in town that very day, and who was seen no more, after eating supper at the hotel, where he left a traveling valise, containing some articles of clothing and papers bearing his name, had in some way been responsible for the fire and had also perished, as nothing has been heard or seen of him since. But certain events which have occurred during the past few days go to prove that at least part of this report is incorrect, and, although it proves beyond doubt the death of the stranger, yet exonerates him from all blame.

“The following facts are copied from the Philadelphia Press:

“The man who visited Union City several weeks ago and perished in the flames of a burning building was the Reverend Lorraine Herschel, of —, and the man known as Royce Dane was in reality his half brother, Ralph Dean, who for reasons best known to himself had substituted the former name for his correct one.

“The lady who was reported to have met her death in the flames was not the wife of Mr. Dean, as reported, but the spouse of the reverend gentleman, and was visiting her brother-in-law at the time. This much has come to light through the lawyer who has had charge of the deceased gentleman's affairs, and is corroborated to a certain extent by the local physician, who states that upon the Sabbath preceding the calamity he had attended Mr. Herschel professionally, and from him learned that his wife, Mrs. Herschel, was absent upon a visit. Upon calling the next day he had not found the reverend sir at home, and at once came to the conclusion that he had gone to join his wife.



“‘But the circumstance which goes to prove the sad deaths of Mr. Herschel and his infant daughter, is the brief statement of Mrs. Herschel herself, who narrowly escaped a horrible fate, being rescued by Mr. Ralph Dean but a few moments before the walls of the burning building collapsed, burying her husband and child beneath the ruins. Mrs. Herschel returned home yesterday, bowed down beneath the weight of her affliction, and at first refused to grant our correspondent an interview, but afterward seemed to alter her determination and thus describes her escape, also explaining why she has not informed the public of the facts before.

“‘It must have been about eleven o’clock when the fire broke out,’ she began. ‘We were all sleeping. My husband arrived after dark and was much fatigued; so retired early. Mr. Herschel and myself have made it a rule to occupy separate apartments since our marriage, and so was not with me. My baby was in her cradle in an adjoining room. When I awoke from my slumbers the fire was creeping toward the bed and the room was full of smoke. I screamed and ran to the door; the hall was one mass of flames! The sight terrified me. I forgot everything and in my terror would surely have perished, but at that moment Mr. Dean sprang across the hallway—his apartment being on the opposite side—and, wrapping me in a blanket, rushed through the flames and bore me in safety out upon the lawn. Then I thought of my husband and child; but before Ralph could return into the house the roof fell in and the building was in ruins.’ Here she stopped to remove the tears from her eyes and compose herself.

“The reported waited respectfully for a few moments and then asked:

“‘Had not the conflagration attracted the attention of the people in the neighboring town?’



“ ‘Not at that time. We did not wait to see. Ralph was so horrified at the sight, and we both felt so terribly over our loss that we left the spot just as soon as he could harness a horse, and drive away. We drove until daylight, arriving at a little town called Litchfield, where we have both been confined to our beds until a few days ago. Ralph—Mr. Dean—is now in Cleveland. He was terribly burned, and has gone there for treatment. You see, I will bear the mark of the fire to my grave,’ pointing to a scarcely healed scar upon her cheek.

“ ‘It was a horrible affair,’ commented the reporter.

“ ‘Mrs. Herschel shuddered and averted her eyes.

“ ‘Every one supposed you dead,’ remarked the newspaper man.

“ ‘Yes, so I have heard. We did not give our names to the people who cared for us during our illness. Mr. Dean was very low and I did not care to attract the reporters; so I remained quiet. You see, I am not dead. Mr. Dean is living. My poor husband and dear little child alone perished. Pray let us end this interview; the subject is a painful one to me.’

“ ‘Our correspondent thanked her and left the house. There are several points in Mrs. Herschel’s statement which seem strange and almost improbable, but we will not dwell upon them.

“ ‘There cannot be a doubt but what the Reverend Herschel really perished in the flames. Letters sent to him by his lawyer, banker and others to Chicago have not been called for, although ordered sent them by Mr. Herschel at the time of his leaving home, consequently expected by him. Nothing has been heard of him since that time, and the lawyer is so well convinced of the fact that he has commenced the business of transferring the property of the



deceased to his widow, the same being left her in the will of the deceased, now in the possession of the attorney. Mrs. Herschel gave no explanation as to the probable cause of the fire."

I allowed the paper to fall from my hands to the floor. Dumfounded, staring in amazement, unable to control my thoughts, I sat for fully thirty minutes. Not dead! Rescued from the flames and by him! I alone the sufferer! She, my widow, my fortune going to enrich her! At last, exercising a mighty effort, I rose to my feet and paced the floor. What was to be done? I could not think. Over and over again rang the words: "Not dead! Not dead! She lives!"

"I will return and wrest this fortune from her," the mad thought came to me. "I will show myself to her alive. Her infamy shall be spread broadcast over the civilized world. I will ruin her!"

But my child! Ah, that innocent one must not suffer. Why bring shame to that sweet, helpless one? I sat down and reasoned. In what would I benefit myself by exposing her? Only furnish material for scandal mongers to work upon, supply the newspapers with sensational reading matter, excite pity for myself, have the world point its finger at my prematurely whitened hair and say: "There goes poor Lorraine Herschel. His wife wrecked his life. Poor fellow; he is to be pitied."

I sprang to my feet. No, I would not expose her. The world should not talk. I was dead to them, to her, to him. I would remain so until some day in the future—some day might come when I could wreak a sure, a terrible vengeance upon them both, and not be known except to them. I could not form a plan, but the day would come surely, and then I would not fail as I had before. I would take



time and think, lay my plans well and execute them thoroughly. They thought me dead, had no fear; but they should see! The money—dross! That should go. I could earn money, enough for myself and my child. Ah, another bright thought! She loved the child and grieved for it as one dead. So much the more reason why I should allow her to think us both dead. In some way the child should assist me in my revenge. It would make it more complete.

Like a madman I paced the floor of my room, the gas burning at full head above me. I heard the clocks strike two, but heeded them not. Like the waves upon the sea shore, my thoughts surged upon me. All the old memories of bitter wrong returned, now that I knew that my vengeance was as yet unaccomplished. The burning thoughts coursed tumultuously, like living fire, through my being. Oh, if I could only have spoken! If my tongue would but have obeyed me! Useless to crave. It was silenced, and while my heart was filled, my tongue remained as silent as the grave!

The atmosphere of the room grew stifling. I felt that I must have fresh air; so, seizing my hat and cane, I rushed hastily down the stairs, out upon the street.

Without object or destination I walked, up one street—down another. At last I found myself near the river, a dark, deserted spot, desolate and gloomy. Almost at my feet the dirty waters of the river flowed silently by. I stood and gazed a moment, and then, shuddering involuntarily, turned to retrace my steps. Like a dream comes the memory of a dark, crouching form, springing toward me, the sensation of being struck a heavy blow upon the head, and I knew no more.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE DAWN OF A NEW LIFE.

"A severe blow, which might have resulted seriously," were the first words I heard upon returning to consciousness. Opening my eyes, I looked up into the faces of two gentlemen, who were bending over me.

"Ah, you are conscious!" cried one of them. I tried to reply by bowing my head, but found it impossible to do so, as the slight exertion caused me extreme pain. My neck and head felt very sore, my neck being almost rigid.

"Do not move!" cried the other, seeing my action. "You must lie perfectly still for a few days. You have received a terrible blow upon the skull, and we feared you would not recover. You can, however, use your tongue. It will not materially affect you to talk."

I smiled sadly and conveyed to them that I was dumb. They exchanged glances of surprise.

"A mute, eh? Not deaf?" said one. I indicated that I could hear them, and then, stretching out my arm, saw with satisfaction that I could use it, and expressed a wish to write. They understood me, one of them furnishing me with a blank prescription tablet, and a pencil. "It won't harm him to write," he muttered.

"Where am I?" I wrote, my surroundings being unfamiliar to me.

"At the hospital," replied the gentleman who had first spoken. "We are physicians. Dr. Valentine, my com-



panion; Dr. Babcock, your humble servant. Now, who are you?"

"Henry Allen, at your service."

"Where do you belong, Mr. Allen?"

"I am stopping at the Tremont. How long have I been here?"

"Since four o'clock this morning. It is now nearly ten. You were found lying insensible upon Washington street, near the river, by the patrolman upon the beat, and brought here at once. You had been waylaid by highwaymen and robbed."

Fortunately I had but a small amount of money upon my person. I informed the physicans of the fact; the thieves had in all probabilities taken my gold watch. Making inquiry concerning this I found that such had been the case. My pockets were turned inside out, even my underclothing had been searched, proven from the fact of my clothing having been found in a disordered condition.

"That is a pretty tough neighborhood at night," commented Dr. Valentine. "It is no uncommon occurrence for strangers to be held up and relieved of their valuables and sometimes bodies are found floating in the river. It is quite handy."

I shuddered.

"You had better remain here until you have entirely recovered from the effects of your injuries," said Dr. Babcock. "I will take it upon myself to inform your friends of your accident and leave word at the hotel."

I wrote upon the tablet: "I have no friends in the city. You can inform the people at the hotel, if you please."

"I will do so," he replied, and then, cautioning me to remain as quiet as I possibly could, they left me, Dr. Babcock saying that he would return later in the day.



I followed his instructions fully; indeed, the slightest movement of my head produced such agony that for my own comfort I was glad to do so.

At four o'clock the doctor returned and sat by my side, chatting pleasantly until nearly six. I refrained from writing much, he thinking it best for me to do so, asking me but few questions that I could not answer affirmatively or negatively with my eyes. I felt sorry when the time came for him to leave me. His pleasant conversation had cheered me wonderfully; cheerful talk and pleasant smiles often work cures as effectually as medicines.

I was confined to the hospital for a week, but aside from the pain I had suffered I did not feel any the worse for my accident; indeed, it was one of the best things that could have happened me, for through it I was led on to a meeting with the man who of all others I most dearly love—my blind companion!

But of that later on.

Returning to my hotel, I was overwhelmed with the sympathies of clerks, landlord, bell boys, waiters, etc., usual upon occasions of this kind. I suppose it is natural for every one to condole with one when accident or misfortune has befallen them, whether it comes from the heart or not. I thanked them all for their expressions of sympathy and inquired regarding my mail. My tablet and pencil were now my inseparable companions. I could not have done without them. I had but one correspondent—honest John Adler. He wrote me once a week, telling me how my little one was coming on, and I eagerly looked for his letters. The clerk handed me one. It was from him, and informed me that my darling was prospering as well as any one could wish. In conclusion he said: "All of us love her just the same as if she was our own.



If you ever want some one to adopt her for good don't forget to write. Yours truly, JOHN ADLER."

I smiled, placed the letter in the pocket of my coat and thought no more of it. It returned to me not many days after. Upon leaving the hospital, Dr. Babcock had extended me a cordial invitation to call upon him at his office. "I shall be glad to see you at any time," he had said. "You interest me greatly, Mr. Allen, and I would like to know more of you." I promised him that I would call, and the day following did so.

I found the physician deeply interested in a pamphlet which was spread out before him. Turning at my entrance, he cried: "Come in, Mr. Allen. You have not forgotten your promise, I see."

I wrote upon my tablet the words: "No, I have no friends. It is to me a gratification to find one whom I can look upon as one."

He smiled in a gratified manner, and then, growing serious, asked:

"You have not always been dumb?"

"No, only a short time. A severe nervous shock produced it," I wrote.

"You must feel your affliction keenly?"

I assured him that such was the case.

"It is to me a terrible thing to be obliged to depend upon paper and pencil to express myself," I continued.

A sudden thought seemed to have entered his mind.

"Excuse me, Mr. Allen; but are you a wealthy man?"

I replied in the negative.

"Married?"

I compressed my lips.

"I have been."

"Oh! Have you thought of entering into business here?"



Pardon me, what was your object in coming to Chicago?"

I explained that I had at the time of my arrival no definite object, but at present had thought of entering into some practicable business or turning my attention to literature. His face lit up. Taking up the pamphlet, the reading of which I had interrupted, he called my attention to the printed matter upon the cover. I read and saw that it was the semi-annual report of the asylum for the deaf, dumb and blind, and observed that his name was among those of the directors.

"Here is an opportunity for you," he cried, tapping the little book with his finger, "and if I mistake not, you are just the man for the position—intelligent, patient, kindly and earnest. You see, I am a good judge of character. We need teachers, instructors for these afflicted ones."

I interrupted him, placing my hand upon his arm.

"I do not quite understand you," I wrote. "I fail to see how I could impart knowledge to those who can neither hear nor speak. Of course, I understand that there is a deaf-mute alphabet, but I am not at all familiar with it, and in order to instruct I must first be proficient."

He smiled cheerfully.

"My dear sir," he cried, "in one month you will be able to use your fingers in a way that will surprise you. In two months you will be thoroughly competent. In six months, why, you will not feel the want of your tongue at all. You won't need it. If you will accept the position I will attend to all the rest."

I considered what better opportunity could possibly present itself. Would I not be happier with those I could converse with without the need of pencil and paper? Would I not be performing a useful service to others afflicted even worse than myself? The more I thought



of it the better I liked the idea. I would accept my friend's kind offer. I informed him of my decision.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "You shall take your first lesson to-day. If I mistake not, you will prove a treasure to us. Have you time to drive out to the institution with me this afternoon? Valentine can attend to the hospital cases. I have no serious ones outside, none but what can wait."

I assured him that I was entirely at his service, and in ten minutes was seated by his side in his buggy, being driven rapidly toward my future home, the new life that was opening out before me.

On the way the doctor explained to me that there were several branches of instruction, that is, rudimentary branches. The first, the teaching of the mute alphabet to deaf mutes; the second, the teaching of the blind by the means of raised letters, etc.; the third, teaching the blind the manner of conversing with the mute, viz., by pressing the fingers, each holding the right hand of the other.

"It is an interesting sight to witness a number of mutes clasping the hands of their blind school-fellows, conveying and exchanging ideas, carrying on a conversation almost as easily as if they could see and talk," remarked the doctor, "and you will be surprised to see the rapidity with which it is done. It is an astonishing thing how readily all living things can adapt themselves to circumstances. It was a wise providence that endowed us with more than one sense; a wonderful thing how some, lacking two of the most essential, can adapt the others so that their loss is scarcely felt."

I bowed my head. A wise Providence, indeed.

"We teach every English study," went on the doctor; "history, geography, grammar, reading, writing; in fact, everything necessary to a complete education. We even have some fine musicians."



I smiled at this. It did not seem possible to me that one totally deaf could ever be taught music. I discovered my mistake before many days. I heard a difficult solo, performed correctly upon the piano by a young lady who could not hear a note of the beautiful composition.

Arriving at the asylum, my friend introduced me to the managers, instructors, etc., and then with pride conducted me over the entire premises. It was a model institution of its kind, and before I left the building I had decided to accept the offer made me by Dr. Babcock. He seemed much pleased over my decision and chatted enthusiastically upon his pet hobby, until we reached his office. The following day I returned to the asylum to remain, and took my first lesson in the course of instruction, which during the years to come I was to impart to others.

As the doctor had prophesied, I made rapid progress. I felt interested in the new field of usefulness opened up to me and applied myself diligently, with the result that at the expiration of six months I was pronounced capable of entering upon my duties as instructor. I had now something to occupy my mind and take my thoughts from myself; during the day I seldom thought of the events of my past life. Sometimes at night, when all was silent, and I lay staring at the walls or ceiling of my apartment, before sleep came to me, the old bitter memories would return, and the wound in my heart reopen and cause the desire for vengeance to possess me, but at these times I would struggle with the feeling and, driving it from me, again forget for the time the sorrow of my life.

And so the years passed by, until the great change came, the change that blessed me!



## CHAPTER XXV.

## AN ABDUCTION AND WHAT IT LED TO.

I had been at the asylum a few days over three years and had made up my mind that the future years of my life should be passed there, where silence reigned and peace abounded. I felt more content, better satisfied with myself than I knew I could possibly feel in any other position. It was contentment I wanted, that and forgetfulness. If I could but have driven out that gnawing desire, which still ate at my heart, I could have been perfectly happy; but until in some way I could become revenged I felt that I never could be entirely content. Strange that this feeling still clung to my mind with such tenacity. In every other respect I felt like a new man, but in my moments of greatest peace would come the voice to my heart, making itself heard in spite of me.

"She lives! He lives! You alone have been the loser; they have gained everything."

I would strive to drive this feeling from me; to check this devilish voice. Useless. At unexpected times, even in the midst of my duties, it would force itself upon me.

"She lives! She has lied, and so now enjoys your wealth. She is honored, respected as the widow of a good man. No black stain sullies her reputation. You are dead. Be revenged! Crush her as she has crushed you!"

At these times I could feel my blood fairly boiling. I



would set my teeth and only by the exercise of a powerful will could I smother the demon, which strove to overpower me, and continue with my labors. The glorious summer of my third year had come. I was resting in my room one evening after my labors, enjoying the peace of quiet rest after work well done, drinking in the fresh evening air as the gentle zephyrs softly entered through the open window, when a sudden rap upon my door startled me. Rising, I threw it wide open, disclosing the familiar form of Dr. Babcock and a stranger.

"Pardon me for breaking in upon your meditations, my friend," exclaimed the doctor, "but to-day this gentleman called upon me—Professor Deveau, of Buffalo, and as he expressed a desire to visit our institution, although the hour was late, I concluded to drive him over and turn him over to you. I felt confident that in your pride you would do us ample justice."

I bowed.

"Allow me to introduce you. Professor Roger Deveau, this is Mr. Henry Allen, one of our principal instructors."

"I am well pleased to form the acquaintance of such an estimable gentleman," came from the lips of the stranger, as, stepping forward in a half hesitating way, he extended his hand. Then I saw that he was blind, a blindness from which there was no possible chance of recovering. A hideous cicatrice extended diagonally from his brow, down across both eyes. The mark of fire—both eyes had been burned out.

I shuddered slightly; the effect produced upon me being one of great compassion for the man, horror at the hideous scar. I grasped the hand extended and pressed it, unconsciously answering his greeting by the means of communication existing between the blind and mutes.



A smile of pleasure lightened up his countenance.

"Ah, you are an adept in the language of the mutes," he remarked, pleasantly. "We shall have no difficulty in understanding each other."

"Oh, yes; Mr. Allen is proficient in all the branches of instruction carried on in our institution," put in the doctor.

In the dusk of coming night I studied the countenance of the man, whose hand I tightly clasped, as if loath to release it. A noble face, marked by the hand of time or care—the broad, high forehead, seamed and furrowed; the cheeks and lips, concealed beneath a heavy growth of beard, streaked with gray; the hair, worn long, was also turning gray—not the face of an old man, yet he must have been forty, judging from the tell-tale evidences which time had brought. I gave no thought at that time that sorrow might have done for him what it had for me. I had no reason to think so. I never saw him unhappy, distressed by bitter memories.

"I am more than delighted to meet you," he said at last, his musical voice going to my heart. "For three years I have been connected with an institution of this kind at Buffalo. It was to witness the operations of other schools that I left my home several days ago. We have heard much of the success of your admirable system, and I have been anxious to visit this place for some time. I am sure you will give me all the information you can?"

I assured him that it would afford me much pleasure to be of service to him, and the doctor, pleading an important case, left us. We sat and conversed until bed time—he in his deep, musical voice, I with my fingers.

Professor Deveau occupied a bed in my room that night. The following day I conducted him over our in-



stitution, explaining each important factor to our great success in such a manner that, blind as he was, he claimed to have been the recipient of much of interest and benefit to his future operations.

About one o'clock the doctor called for him, and it was with much regret that I saw him take his departure. I had grown very much attached to him during his short stay and secretly wished that he could have remained with me, a friend, I felt, that I could have reposed the utmost confidence in. One week from that time Dr. Babcock paid me another visit. After a few moments' desultory conversation he asked:

"How did you like Professor Deveau?"

"Very much," I replied with my fingers.

He laughed.

"He seems to entertain the same feeling toward you," he said.

I asked him to explain, which he did by taking a letter from his pocket, which he had that morning received, dictated by the subject of our conversation, in which he asked if there was a possibility of obtaining a position in the institution.

An eager feeling of desire came to me.

"Have you replied to his inquiry?" I asked.

"Not yet. I thought I would consult with the board of managers before doing so. I believe Mr. Deveau would be a valuable acquisition to our staff, but, of course, could not offer him a position unless they agreed with me."

"What has been the result of your consultation?"

"They have left it all with me."

"And you?"

"I shall write the professor, accepting his proposition."

I grasped his hand joyfully. I felt that I was about to gain a dear friend. The doctor left me.



In a few days Roger Deveau arrived, came to stay.

At our mutual request he was consigned to my apartment, and then began that undying friendship, I might say love, which has brightened my existence, wrought happiness to my distressed mind.

In the month that followed I confided to him in part the story of my life, withholding the incidents, as I felt that they would not interest him or benefit me. I told him that my wife had deceived me, that through her my affliction had come, informed him that she thought me dead, also her child, but that the little one lived and was being well cared for. At times, during the relation, a shadow crossed his countenance, the shadow of sympathy, I took it to be; in no other way could my story have affected him. I also told him of the desire for vengeance which at times possessed me. In his gentle tones he strove to show me how wrong it was to harbor such feelings. "If she has so wronged you, depend upon it, she has suffered even as yourself. The feeling of remorse, eating at her heart, when she thinks that through her both husband and child have died, must in itself be a terrible, never ending punishment."

I had not thought of that. True! She must suffer. The Almighty would surely exact from her full payment for everything. Why not leave her to Him—into His hands consign her?

I battled with this feeling for many weeks.

"Some day I will tell you the story of my life," he one day said to me, as we sat, hand in hand, by the open window. "I cannot bring myself to do so now. The wounds are too fresh. My history is even darker than your own. You shall know it all some day, and in that day I may lose your love and friendship."



I hastened to assure him that nothing could shake my faith in him. He smiled sadly.

"I hope not," he said, and the subject was dismissed.

I still received my weekly letters from John Adler. A few days after my last conversation with my friend upon the subject mentioned above, the accustomed communication reached me.

The letter was as follows:

"Mr. Allen—Respected Sir: A strange thing happened here yesterday. You know some of my neighbors take summer boarders every year, and for a month past a widow lady and her servant have been stopping at the farm house of my nearest neighbor. Yesterday the lady stopped at my house and asked for a glass of milk. She said she had been out walking and was tired, and asked me as a favor to let her rest under the apple trees and refresh herself with the cooling drink. Of course, I couldn't say no. While she was lying, with her eyes half closed, looking up at the sky, your little girl, who walks like a good one and talks very plain, toddled over to the lady and said, in her baby talk:

"'You is a pretty lady.'

"I was standing near enough to hear her words and see that the lady looked up and turned as white as death when she saw the child.

"'What is your name, baby?' I heard her ask.

"Before the child could answer her I stepped forward and said:

"'The baby annoys you,' making a movement to take her away. The lady clung to her and said: 'No, she does not annoy me. I love children. I had a little one, who would have been just about her age if she had lived.'

"I said it was too bad, and tried to take the child away again.



“‘What is her name?’ she asked me, taking no notice of my movement.

“‘Rachel. She is my little one—Rachel Adler.’

“When I said Rachel I thought the lady would faint. She turned deathly white again, and then began to cry:

“‘Rachel!’ she moaned. ‘The name of my child!’

“While she was crying I managed to get the baby away from her. She wiped her eyes at last and said:

“‘You must pardon me, sir, for thus giving way to my grief. I have never forgotten my child, and your little one reminds me so of my own—has the same tender, loving eyes, the same name. A mother’s heart does not forget.’

“I said something, feeling rather confused like, and soon the lady left me.

“Now, sir, I thought I had better write you all about this. I don’t know who this woman is. I have not had time to try and find out her name. I know she can’t be your wife, because you told me your wife was dead, but (you won’t feel bad, I hope) you remember you told me when you left the baby with me that you could not give your reasons for wanting me to give her my name, and putting this and that together I don’t think your right name is Allen, and the whole thing looks suspicious. We all love the little thing—just the same as if she was our own, and would adopt her by law if you would be willing. If you are her father and adopt her to us we can hold her, no matter what anybody says, and I think this would be the best thing to do. This woman can easily find out from the neighbors that I ain’t got any young children, and every blessed one of ’em knows the story about the little one, because one of my men that I discharged six months after you left has gone to the trouble of telling everybody about it.



"I don't say this woman has any claim on the child. I don't know whether she will give me any trouble or not. I don't know anything about it, but I thought I had better write to you and you could make up your mind what you wanted to do.

"Hoping to hear from you soon, I am yours, respectfully,  
JOHN ADLER."

I had barely finished reading when my companion entered the room, groping his way toward the window.

"Henry," he called in his deep, musical voice.

I gave evidence that I was before him.

He came to me and, finding a chair, sank upon it, as if fatigued.

"I am weary to-night," he said. "I have exerted myself more than usual to-day."

Without making comment I told him that trouble threatened me. His face grew concerned at once.

"Trouble, my friend?" he cried. "Can I be of assistance to you?"

I briefly related the substance of the letter. He sat silent for some time, apparently thinking. Suddenly he asked:

"What are your future intentions concerning your child, Henry?"

Answering, I told him that I had not come to any positive conclusion.

"Why not do as this man desires, then? Would she not be happier with the mystery and uncertainty of her former life kept from her—believing herself really the child of this farmer—than to be with you, deprived of a mother's tender care, without even her father's voice to console her? Think of it, my friend. To my mind it would be the best thing to do."



I replied then that I had in the past thought to wreak my vengeance through the child, in some way to bring her mother anguish in retaliation for what she had caused me.

A shade of horror crept over the bearded face of my friend.

"What!" he cried in tones of reproach. "Make of the child an instrument to torture the mother? Shame, my friend! It is not like you to allow such thoughts to find even one moment's resting place in your mind. The mother is already suffering. You tell me that this strange visitor to the home where the little one now is gave way to her grief. Do you not believe that she is your wife, the mother of your child? If so, do not her tears prove to your mind that she is suffering? Drive that thought from you! Give your child to this man, or, exercising heavenly forgiveness, restore her to the mother."

I shrank from him. I told him I could not do that, that I must be as one dead to her forever.

He shrugged his broad shoulders.

"So be it, then," he murmured. "It was merely a suggestion. I can understand why you cannot bring yourself to follow it, but do the other thing, Henry. Give your little one to the family who will make her happier than you could. You are content to abide with my love. We are almost as dear brothers. We cannot be separated, I feel. Forget your past; let it be buried as I have buried mine, and this little one, who almost daily reminds you of what has been, remove her from your life, and let us begin a new existence together."

His words decided me. It should be as he said. I sat down and began a letter to John Adler. I had scarcely written the introductory lines when the door opened and one of the attendants entered, bearing a telegram. It was for me.



I tore open the envelope and read these lines:

"Come immediately; a sad misfortune has come to us!

"ADLER."

My heart stood still for the instant. A sad misfortune! What could it mean? Had anything happened my child? Why could he not have been more explicit?

I turned to Roger (the attendant had left the apartment) and told him what I had received. His face grew anxious at once.

"Go," he said earnestly. "Do not delay a moment."

I followed his advice and in two hours was on my way to John Adler's house.

He met me at the station, his face looking careworn and haggard.

"I thought you would come on the first train and so come down to meet you," were his first words.

"My child!" I wrote upon my tablet. "She is not dead?"

"No, not that," he replied slowly. "She is gone. Some one has stolen her."

Her mother's work! It all came to me like a flash.

"Come to the house. I can tell you the whole story better there," he continued. "Everybody is staring at us here. The whole business is in everybody's mouth, and they surmise who you are. So come to the house and you shall know all. I was not to blame, sir."

Mechanically I followed him, my mind busy. How could I recover her I determined that she should not have her at any cost.

Mrs. Adler seemed bowed down with grief. Upon seeing me she burst into tears.

"We could not help it, sir," she sobbed. "We had no suspicion of her intentions."

I assured the good old soul that I did not blame either



herself nor her worthy husband, and then, closeting myself with the man, heard the story he had to tell me.

"As I wrote you in my last letter," he began, "everybody in the neighborhood knew the child was not ours, and was well informed about the way we came to get her. The woman, when she left me, must have commenced inquiring about the baby, for the next day (yesterday) she came back and without knockin' came into the kitchen, where we was eatin' dinner.

"'Mr. Adler, you lied to me yesterday,' she said, tremblin' all over, her black eyes flashin'."

"I asked her to explain what she meant by sayin' that.

"'I mean this,' she said. 'Nearly four years ago a man brought that child here and, after being sick a long time, left her with you. That man was my husband! I thought both he and the child dead, have mourned for them all these years, but when I looked into that baby's eyes yesterday I felt that in some way I had been mistaken, that the child was mine, and that my husband lived. Upon my return home I made inquiry concerning the little one, and from the man who formerly worked for you, now in the employ of the farmer whose house is now my home, I learned the truth. He told me all, and I now come to demand my child.'

"We, the ole woman and myself, were thunderstruck. Could this be possible

"'All that you have said about the child bein' left us is as straight as a string,' I said. 'But how do you know this man was your husband?'

"She took a piece of paper from her pocket, a scrap of dirty paper, and showed it to us. I looked at it, and saw it was one of the papers you had written on, while you was with us.



"The man who gave me my information also gave me this,' she said. 'He picked it up from the floor one day, to light his pipe, but seeing that it bore the name of the man who had left the child, he kept it, thinking perhaps it might come in useful at some time. You see the name written there? It is Henry Allen. I could swear to this handwriting at any time or place. The formation of the H in the first name is peculiarly that of my husband's hand. The man you know as Henry Allen is my husband. This child is mine.'

"I didn't know what to say. She didn't wait long for me to say anything, but went right on.

"Another thing. My baby had two large moles on either side of the spine. You have doubtless observed the same upon this child.'

"I had noticed the marks. I didn't answer. I couldn't very well. I felt that she was speaking the truth; so couldn't find the words to answer her.

"You are silent,' she said at last. 'You admit that all this is true? I demand my child.'

"I answered her then.

"I can't do it,' I said. 'Mr. Allen left this child with me, and I can't give her up without his say so.'

"My Lord, how mad she got.

"You shall see,' she snapped. 'You cannot keep her from me,' and then she flounced out of the room. When we got up this mornin' the baby was gone. In some way she had got into the house and stolen her. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if that low down dog that told her all about it helped her. He knew as much about the house as I did. I believe it, because he ain't been seen all day. I've had the country searched, but ain't heard hide nor hair of any of 'em."



"Did you inquire at the depot?" I wrote.

"Of course; she didn't go that way."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Could she have engaged a team at the livery stable?"

"I have asked 'em all, and they say not."

"How had she made her escape?" I pondered, all the old feeling of rage returning. I would find her. A smart detective should be put upon the case.

The world should be searched. She should not have my child.

I was obliged to remain over night with Adler, there being no train until morning. Little sleep came to me, the greater portion of the long night being passed in walking the floor. Morning found me more resolved, and after eating a slight breakfast forced upon me by my kind friends, I hurried to the station, caught the first train going west, and before noon was in Chicago.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

## WHAT FOLLOWED.

I made my way directly to the office of a celebrated detective and laid the facts of the case before him. He gave me great encouragement.

"A very simple case," he observed. "I shall find the child inside of a week." I felt easier in my mind, he seemed so positive of success, and paying him a sum in advance, receiving the assurance that he would commence operations at once, I returned to the asylum and my friend. He gave evidence of the pleasure my return brought him.

"I missed you sorely, even the short time you were absent," he cried. Then, when I had seated myself, asked for the full particulars.

I told him all, not mentioning, however, that I had placed the case in the hands of a detective.

"So the mother has the child," he observed thoughtfully, when I had finished.

"Yes."

"What are you going to do?"

"Wrest my child from her."

He sat silent for a time.

"How are you going to do this?" he asked finally.

I told him that I had employed a detective. His face grew pale and sad.

"You are going to hound her? Henry, my friend, you



are adopting a wrong course. This poor woman, no matter what she has done in the past, loves her little one to desperation. She is her mother. Think you, would not your mother have done the same? Would not any mother, even you, if placed in her position, act as she has done? For years, as you have told me, she has lived, thinking her little one and her husband dead. She finds her child by accident. No, not that. Providence guided her steps. All the strength of her womanly heart goes out to her offspring. She cannot obtain possession of the little one in any other way, and so she abducts her. I cannot blame her. You should not. I will admit she has wounded you sorely, but think, my friend. Have not the years of sorrow and remorse been sufficient punishment? To err is human, to forgive divine. Exercise that divine forgiveness; go to her, find her, not to tear from her breast the child, but to take her to your heart and say: 'My wife, I forgive you. Let us forget the past; let us begin a new life.' "

"You do not know all," I rapidly communicated to him. "If you could see my prematurely aged face, my whitened hair, you would not say this. If Providence guided her to the place where my darling lived in peace, why did not that same supreme power direct her aright in the bitter days of the past?"

"She is a woman. Since the days of Eden her sex have been weak. Perhaps she was not to blame. You have never told me all your story; so I cannot judge. But my sympathies, my friend, are for her, even if she has wronged you."

"You pity her?"

"Yes; but I love you, my friend."

The words brought the tears to my eyes. His was a noble heart.



"I cannot bring myself to think as you suggest," I communicated. "The memories are too bitter. My child I must have."

"Think again, Henry. A woman brought to bay is more desperate than a wild beast. The wounded lioness will give up her life to shield her young. There are instances on record where a desperate woman has destroyed both herself and children rather than be separated from them. This child now is all she has to live for. Might not she in her desperation prefer death to separation? Think you, would she, from your knowledge of her character, hesitate at taking the life of the little one if brought face to face with the possibility of losing her forever?"

I shuddered. The thought was a terrible one to me. I believed her capable of it; yet I could not bring myself to give up my plan.

I told him so.

"Then you are resolved?" he murmured.

"Yes, fully."

"Then, Henry, I leave the matter in your hands. If in the future sorrow or crime comes from this, remember, I have tried to advise you."

I made no reply. We had never had a point of difference between us before. It grieved me, aye, nettled me that he should thus (to my mind) turn against me.

A week passed. I had heard nothing from the detective, when one day, shortly past noon, he came to me with the information that he had made but little progress.

"I found out how she got off," he announced. "The man that helped her used a team belonging to his employer and drove her to Hillsdale, where she took the train east. I have been to New York and Philadelphia, interviewed the conductor and brakemen of the train



upon which she took passage, but without learning much. So many women travel with children that any one particular female would scarcely attract unusual attention. I have not given up the case, however. I will search the world over if you are willing to stand the expense, and I'll find her."

A sudden resolve took possession of my mind. I would follow her myself. Since the abduction I had not been in proper condition to conscientiously perform my duties. I would resign my position and begin the search myself. I informed the detective that I would have no further use for his services, paid him for his ineffectual efforts, and saw him leave the room with a feeling of satisfaction. He had not been successful. I would be more so.

I informed Roger of my determination that night.

He received the communication with a perceptible saddening of his noble countenance and said quietly:

"I presume that it would be words thrown away to attempt to move you."

I responded affirmatively.

He sighed.

"Very well. When do you propose to start?"

"Inside of a week."

"I shall then make immediate preparations to accompany you."

I had not expected this.

"You will go with me?" I asked.

A tender expression of love came to his lips.

"Whither thou goest I will go," he replied. "My tongue shall be your tongue; your eyes my eyes; our hearts for each other. You did not think I would let you go alone?"

I felt moved at the affection displayed by his words. We would not be separated; the days that came would



not be passed by me in silent communion with my thoughts, not always pleasant ones.

"Be it so," I responded, and nothing further was said upon the subject by either of us.

Dr. Babcock and the board of managers received our resignations regretfully; but, seeing that we were determined (I claimed that an ocean voyage was necessary for my health), they released us from our obligations, and eight days later we stood upon the hurricane deck of an ocean steamer, en route to Liverpool.

My heart told me that she had gone to Europe. I had no grounds for the suspicion, but something seemed to tell me that there I should find my child, and, acting upon the impulse, I secured cabin passage for myself and friend, and in due time arrived upon the shores of Britain.

It is needless to describe the events of the years that followed. Unencumbered by baggage (we carried two valises only), we made the tour of the British isles, and then the continent. The scenes we passed through, the events of travel would fill a large volume, but as others have gone over this ground before me, why repeat it? I was in search of my child, not traveling for pleasure, and as day followed day, until months, then years, had passed, with no tidings of the one I sought, the strange people and countries we traversed brought but little of interest to me. We had been absent from our home and country for nearly three years, when one day, sitting in our apartments in the Westminster Palace Hotel in London, I took my companion's hand and said:

"She is not here, Roger. We should have found her long before this, if such had been the case. We will return to America. Perhaps you were right when you told me that Providence had aided her; that same power seems to protect her even now."



"You are satisfied to give up your search at last?" he asked quietly.

"It seems to be a useless one," I replied.

"Then we will return."

My mind fully resolved, I allowed no time to pass idly by. That same day I secured passage on a steamer which was to sail two days later, and made preparations for departure. Roger seemed happier than he had been in some time; he never had abandoned his original ideas, and had at times tried to advise me against myself—all to no purpose. Now that the years had passed, without fruitful result, I determined of my own free will to give up the search, not with a contented mind, but because I had come to the conclusion that it was useless, a waste of time.

We agreed to visit the theater that night. One of Gilbert and Sullivan's latest productions was to be given its initial performance at the Gaiety, and as we both enjoyed music and needed recreation, we mutually agreed that it would do us good to attend. So, dinner being over, we sallied forth, and, securing good seats, waited for the overture to begin and the curtain to rise.

But we never witnessed the performance that night. An event which drove all thoughts of music or pleasure from my mind and subsequently from his thoughts transpired! We had not been seated ten minutes, when, in glancing absently about the auditorium, my eyes lingering mechanically upon the sea of faces in box, pit and stalls, I caught sight of one which riveted me to my chair—a face I had not seen in long years, one I had once loved and had been in eager search of for years.

The face of my wife!

At first I thought I must be mistaken; but no. Carefully elevating my lorgnette, I brought it to bear upon the



countenance which had attracted me. It was she, and how little changed! A look of melancholy rested in the dark, soulful eyes, a few lines here and there marked the beautiful face; a livid scar marred the contour of her cheek; but she was still beautiful, even more lovely to my mind than in the days when she had been my loved one—my idol! Assuring myself that I was correct in my suspicion, I conveyed the information to my companion.

He turned pale and whispered:

“Are you sure?”

“I cannot be mistaken. I could not forget that face.”

“Then we had better leave our present positions. If she is so near that you can recognize her she may in turn know you. I suppose you contemplate following her?”

“Surely. After all these years think you I would allow her to give me the slip?”

“No, I suppose not,” was his quiet reply.

Rising, we left our seats just as the orchestra burst forth in a grand concentration of harmony. I rapidly formed my plans; we would remain standing in the lobby until the performance was over, and then, exercising extreme caution not to be seen by her, follow her to her place of residence when she left the building. We were not obliged to remain waiting long. At the termination of the first act, as we stood partly concealed behind the portieres that separated the lobby from the auditorium, a female figure passed us, walking with a firm tread, as if in some haste.

“Come,” I pressed upon Roger’s hand, and we followed.

She took a hansom. We did the same.

“Do not lose sight of that carriage,” Roger instructed the driver, I first expressing the words.

“Hall right, sir,” replied the cockney, and away we flew.



It seemed to me our ride would never end.

Through bright streets and dark lanes, over good roads and bad ones the hansom passed and bumped, until at last the little window in the top of the vehicle was thrown open and our "Jehu" said in a loud whisper:

"Tother 'ansom's stopped, gents."

I glanced eagerly out of the window in front. Yes, he had spoken truly; the hansom had stopped, and a familiar form was alighting. A pressure upon my companion's hand and he said for me:

"Drive over to the sidewalk and we will alight."

He obeyed the order, and in five minutes I was standing before the house which she had entered, Roger remaining in the shadows upon the opposite side of the street. Being blind, he could not be of assistance, and so I placed him where he would not attract the attention of a chance passer-by, and crossed the street to the house that now interested me greatly.

A three-story brick building, with outside shutters closely fastened, giving no evidence of being occupied.

After studying the front of the house for a short time without result, the same dark gloom existing, I cautiously ascended the steps leading to the front door, and tried the knob. Fortune smiled upon me. The door was not fastened.

"Strangely negligent," I thought, pushing it open and entering the hall.

The darkness of midnight reigned within, and, listening, not a sound of life reached me. Waiting until my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, I crept forward, determined to search the house until I found that one for whom I sought.

Suddenly, without warning, a burst of light shone down



upon me from above, and a female voice demanded nervously: "Who is there?"

Looking up, I saw the light came from a lamp in the hand of a woman who stood at the head of the stairs and who had asked the question. Fortunately the light did not reflect upon me, I at the time being close to the side of the staircase. I scarcely breathed for some minutes. "I must have been mistaken," I heard the voice mutter, and then darkness reigned once more.

The female figure was that of my wife. Her voice had spoken the words.

She occupied rooms upon the second floor and close to the stairs. That was sufficient. All there remained for me to do was to wait until she had retired for the night and then begin my search for the child.

I had probably lingered about ten minutes, when I thought of Roger. "He may grow alarmed over my long absence," occurred to me, but I could not well leave the house. I feared that some one might lock the door during my absence, and then I would find it a difficult matter to regain entrance. So I came to the conclusion that it would be best to remain and trust to his perspicuity to explain my long absence.

For nearly an hour I waited and then, coming to the conclusion that the inmates of the house must by this time be wrapped in slumber, I crept cautiously up the stairs. The utmost darkness reigned; so I was obliged to exercise extreme caution as I groped my way. I succeeded in reaching the top without making a misstep, and, following the baluster, saw the faint gleam of a light, shining over the transom of a door before me. The turn in the staircase had hidden it until I was close upon it. "This must be the room," flashed through my mind. Creeping



to the door, I listened. Faintly to my ears came the sound of regular breathing, indicating slumber. I tried the door; it was unlocked. The next moment I stood in the room.

The subdued light of the night lamp shone directly upon the bed and those who occupied it—one, Ethel, my wife, her raven hair flowing back over the pillow, the other—my child, greatly changed since last I saw her. She had been but an infant then, now, seven years had passed over her head, but I knew her and I had found her!

For an instant only did I gaze, and then, glancing rapidly about the apartment, my eyes rested upon a long, dark cloak which was spread out over a chair—just the thing to fold about her! I stepped forward, passing near the dressing case. Providence was upon my side that night, for, as I glanced in the direction of the bureau, I saw the printed label of a vial standing with some others there. "Chloroform, poison," I read. Noiselessly I removed the cork and applied the mouth of the vial to my nostrils. Yes, it was the subtle anaesthetic. I fully understood the proper use of the drug; so, saturating my handkerchief, I crept to the bed and, standing by the side of my sleeping wife, I applied it to her nostrils. A faint sigh, then an effort to turn the head away—then she became helpless. I considered a moment and then applied the handkerchief to the nostrils of the child. She soon succumbed to its influence. Throwing down the handkerchief, I seized the helpless little one and wrapped her in the cloak, then, with a feeling of joy, left the room, crept down the stairs and made my way out of the house.

I found Roger awaiting me anxiously.

"Thank God, you have returned safely," he whispered as I stood by his side.

I laid the child upon a doorstep and rapidly told him of



my success. I had barely finished when a four-wheeled cab came rattling by.

"Stop it," I communicated to Roger. He did so. The cab drew up before us.

"Drive us to the 'Palace,' Westminster," ordered my friend, and soon we were on our way.

I kept the child slightly under the influence of an anaesthetic the next day, while I did some shopping, providing her with necessary clothing. This accomplished, we left London and the day following took passage on the ocean steamer, our mission successfully accomplished, my child in my possession once more.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

## THE SHADOW OF MISFORTUNE.

I deem it unnecessary to dwell upon the events of an voyage home. It is natural to suppose that, upon recovering consciousness, the child's first cry was for her mother, and for three days she absolutely refused to be consoled or comforted. Upon Roger taking her in his arms and telling her in his deep, loving voice, so tender and kind, that I was her father and would care for her in the future, she burst into a passion of childish tears, stamped her foot and said that she had no father—her mamma had told her so; that we were both bad men, were going to kill her, and peremptorily demanded to be taken to her mother.

Feeling that she might arouse suspicion in the minds of the officers or passengers if they heard her story, we deemed it advisable to keep her in the cabin, and by kind treatment reconcile her to me, and this plan was carried out, the little one being brought on deck but once during the voyage and then at night.

But we landed in New York without any trouble and felt thankful that we were again in the land of the free. I half expected that an officer would meet us at the dock armed with a warrant for our detention, as I knew the mother would naturally feel her loss terribly, and would first of all blame me for the abduction, she knowing that I lived, and more, I had dropped my handkerchief that night in her apartment, and I feared that my assumed



name, known to her, was stamped upon it. But my fears proved groundless; no officer interfered with us, and without remaining in New York any longer than was absolutely necessary, we set out for Cincinnati. My reason for going to the principal city of Ohio, instead of Chicago, can be explained as follows:

I had read some time before in an English paper the advertisement of a private school for young girls, located at Russellville, Kentucky. The paper had stated that children would be taken and carefully brought up by competent, kind teachers, and could be left by parents or guardians until of age. I came to the conclusion that this would suit my case exactly, and my companion sharing my views, we made an immediate step in that direction upon leaving New York. The child by this time had recovered her natural gaiety of spirits to a great extent. Our never failing kindness, together with the purchase of a complete outfit of new clothing, seemed to win her over to us, and the novelty of her new life furnishing a daily change of scene, she ceased her repining and expressed herself as satisfied. I felt delighted and anticipated no trouble from her. Kindness had won her. I determined to be ever so in my demeanor. She should not want; my child should be happy if my efforts could make her so.

I have neglected to mention that during my term of service at the asylum I had invested my salary—\$5,000 per annum—in real estate in the city of Birmingham, Alabama. A boom in property chanced to increase the value of my possessions shortly after, quadrupling them in value. So I was not a poor man, nor a wealthy one, for that matter, but possessed of sufficient means to supply my needs.

We arrived at Russellville, about dusk one evening, and



were driven directly to the school. My darling was taken in charge by a kindly faced woman, the principal, and that night slept in her new home. We did not leave the little town for a week; I wished to remain long enough to enable Rachel to become acquainted and feel at home, and when at last we took our departure, Roger and I, it was with the feeling that she would be happy there.

Upon the last day of our stay we told the principal a few facts concerning her charge. I entered her under the name of Rachel Allen, informed the matron that the child's mother lived, but was hardly the woman to have custody of the little one; warned her to watch her closely, and keep me posted concerning her.

"Her mother may find her," I said in conclusion. "If so, be careful and watchful, and do not, under any circumstances, permit her to leave your institution unless accompanied by some one you can trust."

The principal assured me that every care should be taken, and I took my departure, feeling satisfied in mind.

"That woman can be trusted," my friend remarked as we left the building, after bidding the child farewell. I agreed with him; I thought so myself. We had come to the conclusion that it would not be a wise thing to return to Chicago. If my wife did try to recover the child, that would very likely be the point where she would begin investigation on this side of the Atlantic. We had traveled so long that it had almost become a second nature to us, and we agreed that for some time at least we would visit the principal cities and points of interest in our own country.

We went to New Orleans, then through Texas, and from El Paso started to make the tour of Mexico, and so a year passed pleasantly by. I now felt contented and happy,



and when, upon returning to the north, via Kentucky, we stopped at Russellville and found Rachel growing in stature, beauty and knowledge, I was happier than I had been in years.

During the years that followed we traveled over the entire continents of both North and South America—not rapidly, merely to get through with an inflicted task, but slowly, lingering even months in some places that seemed to suit our fancies and afford us food for thought or appreciation. They were blissful, happy years to each of us, and when there was no more that we cared to visit we regretted that the world was not larger, that there was not some new unknown land that we might discover.

Like the great Alexander, we sighed for fresh worlds—not to conquer, but to traverse.

Six years passed. We returned to the United States, taking passage from Buenos Ayres to New York upon a sailing vessel. We were in no hurry, and so adopted that means of transportation. During our absence I had received monthly letters, both from the principal of the school and my darling. She wrote me that she was coming on nicely, was well satisfied, but longed to see her papa. She was at that time fourteen years of age, not a robust girl, the principal wrote me, but refined and lady-like, well developed, but slender.

As she grew older I expended large sums upon her, even sending money to purchase a piano and several other musical instruments, money for dress, money for horses and things of like nature.

Roger remonstrated with me.

“You are foolishly extravagant,” he would say. “I believe in doing anything for her good and future welfare, but you are overdoing it.”



But his words had no effect upon me. I would laugh and remit again.

We arrived in New York and secured apartments at the old travelers' stand-by, the Astor House. For nearly six months we lingered. I had given up all fear of being found by Ethel and took no precautions against discovery. I had made up my mind at least a score of times to visit Rachel, but each time put the proposed date of departure further away. Would that I had not done so. If I had gone when I first determined to do so, she would now be with me. The blow fell at last. It came as before, in the shape of a telegram from the school:

"Come at once," it read. Only that; but the words fell like a dark shadow of evil upon my heart. I lost no time in answering it in person, and alone; Rogers was ill at the time, suffering from a severe cold. He insisted upon accompanying me, but the physician in charge feared pneumonia and told him so, and so, unwillingly, he permitted me to depart without him.

I arrived at Russellville at about the same hour as when I had brought my darling nearly seven long years before. The same hackman drove me to the school (do hackmen ever die, I wonder?). The principal met me with a sad face. Using my tablet, I asked her what had happened.

"Come into the parlor, sir," she said. "The story is a long one, and I wish to explain everything."

I followed her.

"It is concerning your daughter," she began.

I anxiously waited for her to continue, which she did in a few moments.

"Two days ago a lady called, ostensibly to visit our institution. She gave the name of Mrs. Branscombe, and seemed very much a lady. I took great pleasure in show-



ing her about and introduced her to many of the elder pupils. Naturally, I felt some pride in my scholars, as I have ever taken great pains to advance them, and so—perhaps foolishly—I did my utmost to show the results of my years of teaching. Among others, I presented Rachel. I observed a peculiar look in the eyes of my visitor upon beholding her, but thought no more of it.

“‘This is Miss Rachel Allen?’ the lady inquired.

“‘Yes, one of my brightest pupils,’ I replied.

“‘She took the girl’s hand and led her to a sofa, and whispered a few words in her ear. The girl blushed perceptibly.

“‘I have been flattering her upon her beauty,’ my visitor explained to me, then, observing the magnificent piano which your money purchased for the use of your child, she asked:

“‘Who performs upon that beautiful instrument?’

“‘I do, madam,’ replied Rachel.

“‘Will you play for me?’ was the natural request.

“‘Willingly,’ exclaimed the girl, and without waiting for a second invitation she sat down and played.

“While she was performing one of my teachers entered the room and informed me that I was needed elsewhere. Thinking it no harm to leave them together, I excused myself and left the room. I observed that the music ceased a few moments later, but gave the circumstance no thought; there was nothing unusual in it to my mind. I was gone about fifteen minutes, and upon returning, as I was about to enter the room, heard these words, which caused me to pause, with my hand upon the knob: ‘You are my daughter, Rachel, and I, as your mother, have the best claim upon your affections. I have told you the true story of my past life. I have been guilty of great



wrong to your father, but I have suffered, and have found my punishment even greater than I deserved. You know all, my child. Turn not against me.'

"I waited to hear no more, but opened the door and entered. I found Rachel sitting, still before the piano, a look of horror in her beautiful eyes, while upon her knees beside her was the visitor, Mrs. Branscombe. She hastily rose at my entrance and began a confused apology. I interrupted her.

" 'It is not necessary, madam,' I said. 'I have heard your last words and know who you are. This child has been placed under my charge by her father and I cannot permit any further conversation between you. You will oblige me by leaving my house.'

"I half expected a haughty reply, but it did not come. She seemed crushed utterly, and with one appealing glance at the girl slowly left the room and the house. I saw her to the door and then returned to Rachel. She had not stirred; she seemed as if turned to stone.

" 'My child,' I cried, approaching her, 'confide in me, what has she told you?'

"My words aroused her. Turning her eyes upon me, she replied, in tones of despair:

" 'I cannot; indeed, I cannot.'

" 'Who is this woman?' I asked, knowing full well, but wishing to see how she would reply.

" 'She is my mother. Oh, my poor mother! my poor father!'

"Then the tears came. For ten minutes she sobbed passionately upon my breast. I tried to comfort her, endeavored to persuade her to confide in me, but without effect. She refused to enlighten me.

"All that day she wept and moaned, until the strain upon



her nervous system brought about an attack of hysteria. I put her to bed and summoned our physician.

"‘She has received a shock, heard bad news or something,’ he said, and, leaving some medicine, took his departure, saying that he would return the following day. The morning came, and I hastened to her room to see how she had rested. To my dismay I found it deserted. Rachel was not there, but upon her dressing-table was this note. You can read it. It explains itself. I will say, before you read, that we have instituted search for her; so far without success. Up to this time she has succeeded in keeping her whereabouts a secret. I am nearly wild with grief—I loved her so."

I eagerly seized the note and with trembling hands smoothed out the sheet of paper and read:

"Dear Miss Walton—I have thought it best to leave your sheltering roof. You cannot understand the terrible thoughts that urge me on, nor can I explain. If she comes again, tell her that the story of shame poured into my ears by her lips has caused me to do this. If my father asks, tell him that I know all, and he will not blame me. Thanks to his generosity I have a sufficient sum to support me for a long time, until I can find employment. I go out upon the world, to make a name for myself, at least to be free from the finger of scorn, which will be pointed at me when all is known, and I feel that it soon must be. Do not blame me, and let me go in peace. I shall never return to you. Your unhappy pupil, RACHEL."

I allowed the note to fall from my fingers. Unhappy fate! still pursuing me, even through my child. "Verily, the sins of the parents shall be visited upon the children." God's law, but is it a just one? My heart at that bitter moment repudiated the law of the Almighty. Cruel, not



just or kind. My poor child! Gone out upon the world to escape from her mother's sin, her father's fall. At that moment I could not decide what was the best thing to be done. I felt utterly crushed. Then came the eager desire to find her. She must not throw her young life away. Once found I could persuade her to abide with me, to forget it all. I formed my plans. That my child had left the school would certainly come to the ears of Ethel. She would move heaven and earth to find her. She must not succeed, and my address must be kept from her. Through Miss Walton I would transact the business. I would employ the most skillful detectives, and send them to her. She should be supplied with the necessary money to carry on the search, keeping my whereabouts a secret. When the girl was found then I could show myself. I dreaded a meeting with my wife. I did not wish to gaze upon her face. I felt that I would kill her. Even that night when I had stood over her sleeping form, the temptation had come to me, but she had looked so beautiful, and the child was by her side, so I had put it from me. But now! I doubted my strength. Had she not brought upon me all my sorrow? Even through her our child was a wanderer this night. I felt almost overcome and Miss Walton observed it, for she said:

"Bear up under this affliction, my friend. It will all be right."

I thanked her with my eyes, and then, composing myself, communicated my plans to her. She eagerly agreed to assist me in any way that she possibly could, and so, arranging everything, I returned to my friend, the only one on earth that remained by me, a true friend, a loving companion. I found him convalescent, and eager to hear my story. I told him all, including the farewell note written to Miss Walton.



His kind face darkened.

"And your heart is sad, my friend. You yearn for your child, and the old feeling of bitter hatred against your wife has returned."

"Ten-fold," I replied.

"Wrong again, Henry," he murmured. "She did it for the best. Surely, you do not think that in telling the story of her shame to her child she expected to turn her heart against you? No, not that. Shall I tell you what I think?"

I pressed his hand.

"You may doubt this, but, Henry, I believe that your long suffering wife would give the world to be reconciled to you again. I believe that in telling this story to your child she hoped to excite her sympathy. and through her bring you back to her. Think, my friend; does it not seem likely?"

"It might be so, but I can never call her wife again," I replied.

A deep sigh escaped him.

"Well, be it so, my friend. Search for your child if you will, but depend on it, happiness will never come to stay until you are reunited a loving family. If you cannot bring yourself to believe this, at any rate, forgive her, Henry. God has proven to you his power. He has punished her and is chastening you. Leave her to Him and drive these thoughts forever from you. For the past few years I have believed, and felt happy in that belief, that you had forgotten the past, but now I see that it was not so. Memory has not been dead, only sleeping. In spite of your happy exterior the same bitter recollections have been growing at your heart. Drive them from you. Begin a new life, even at this late day. Leave your sorrows and your child to God. He will right every wrong."



His tone, beseeching, eloquent, so worked upon me that I fell upon my knees and bowed my head. The tears came to my eyes and I wept, but it did me good. It relieved my oppressed soul, and when I again arose, it was with the fixed determination of following his advice. I would not sorrow nor grieve. She should be driven from my heart and memory. My child, in the hands of the Almighty, could not suffer; the day would come when I should see her face once more. The search should be continued, and I would trust to that Providence who in the past had seemed to be against me to right the wrong and bring it about in his own divine way.

My declaration brought joy to the heart of my beloved friend.

"Thank God for this," he murmured, clasping my hand.

And so the story is ended. I have related it all, and left it, still incomplete. I will from this on record the events which may transpire. I know not what may come in the future; the past is told!



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## WHAT THE FUTURE BROUGHT.

We are quartered in a quaint, old-fashioned hotel in Baltimore, Roger and I. From every indication, if appearances count for anything, it must have been built at least fifty years ago. The ceiling of our room is very low, the windows narrow and old-fashioned, the door opens upon a dark, dusty hall that leads to a narrow, creaky staircase, which winds down to the dingy office below, where an ever busy and very loquacious individual officiates as day clerk and general manager of the institution. Our accommodations are neither commodious nor elegant, but are comfortable and quiet. The noises from the street cannot reach us, and, although the view from our back windows is of the most commonplace description, and the food is not remarkable either for quality or quantity, Roger cares nothing for the former and we partake of the latter only when from fatigue or lack of inclination we do not care to take our meals at a convenient restaurant.

We are satisfied and happy. I have grown attached to the old house during our stay here. I love it for what it has been, for at one time Brown's hotel was a hostelry of some importance, and, although now old-fashioned, weather-beaten and falling into decay, in the years that have passed it occupied a prominent position among houses of its class, ranking among the best of them. It is



so quiet and peaceful here—a spot to rest and form plans for the future, for I still have a hope for something better, for a life made bright by the sunshine of a daughter's presence. She has not yet been found. I have expended hundreds of dollars without result, but I still hope and—pray, for I now approach my God without fear, trusting in His word. I have forgiven her, my erring wife, and am at peace with the world. Roger has done much to bring about this change. God bless him! Strange that the skilled sleuths employed in the search for my darling have not been able to learn anything concerning her. I believe they have done all they could, but their efforts have so far proven unavailing. I cannot give up all hope. I feel that I must still keep up the search, although it seems but useless. To my mind comes the thought that just as long as I am striving to find her there is a chance that some day I may. It brings me comfort and satisfies me to a certain extent.

Roger is not with me in this. He often rates me for my extravagance in still paying detectives to follow up a blind trail, as he terms it, but I cannot give up.

My dear companion has not been quite himself for several weeks. He is growing pale and care-worn; a settled melancholy seems to have taken possession of him. I have asked to be taken into his confidence, but his replies are evasive.

"It is my past, dear Henry," he has said to me often. "It crowds in upon me at times. Some day you will know and understand," and so I wait, await the opportunity of bringing to him comparative peace and content, as he has brought it to me. I have wondered at times why he shrinks from unbosoming himself to me.

It is a peculiar trait of his sensitive character. I feel



that the secret is eating at his heart. I wish he would resolve to tell me all. Well, I will await his pleasure. Some day, perhaps, he will overcome the feeling that checks him, and open the way for my sympathy and added love, if such be possible. I love him so much already.

I have made no new acquaintances in this beautiful old city. My affliction has proven an effectual barrier. I desire none. Roger suffices for me. One true friend is preferable to a number of careless, shallow chance acquaintances. Roger has done some better. He informed me of the fact, his usual, quiet, sad smile resting upon his lips while relating the occurrence, one morning upon my return from my usual walk. He, feeling indisposed, had not accompanied me, contrary to custom.

"I have had a visitor during your absence," he began.

I expressed my surprise.

"And a lady at that," he continued. "The young lady who cares for the rooms on this floor."

"The chambermaid?" I inquired, smiling.

"Yes, but not of the ordinary class. If I am any judge of breeding, this girl has been educated a lady, brought up among refining influences. Her voice attracted my attention; it is as soft and sweet as the voice of a lark."

"Yes?" I remarked rather absently. He noticed my lack of interest. I had pressed his fingers in reply mechanically.

"You do not appear deeply interested," he said quickly. "If you had met this maiden you could not help but feel attracted toward her. I seldom notice anyone. I have but little in common with the people of the world with whom I come in contact, but, Henry, this girl is a creature of an unusual type. I feel that she is beautiful. I know she has seen trouble."



"How can you know this?"

"Her voice betrayed her. So sad, so touching, it went to my heart, Henry. It seemed to me that at some time, perhaps in my dreams, I had heard it before. If I could but have seen her face," speaking regretfully.

I aroused myself from the apathy that had controlled me when he had begun, and, feeling some interest now, remarked:

"I will make it a point to see her for you, dear Roger, and then you shall know if you have judged aright."

"I am not mistaken," he replied quietly. "The blind cannot see with their natural organs of vision, but through the eyes of the soul, by the means of the heart, they behold the beauties of character. Why, I have never gazed upon your face nor heard your voice, but my heart told me you were noble and good when my hand first clasped your own. I was not deceived in you, my loved companion, and I shall not be in this girl. You probably think it strange for me to feel so attracted; it is not like me to notice any one particularly. I have found neither pleasure nor profit in past intercourse with the world, but there is a something about this sweet-voiced maiden, a subtle influence that thrilled me when she spoke, a sensation of keen pleasure, not unmixed with pain, in the realization that she was near me. I have known the same feeling but once before, and," here his voice grew softer, saddened and subdued, "that was in the past."

I must confess I felt surprised, but made no reply, as I could see by my companion's expressive countenance that his mind was living again in the days gone by. For several moments we both sat quietly in thought; he with his noble head bowed, mechanically holding my hand, then, arousing himself, as if with an effort, he said:



"You must see her, Henry. We must know more of this girl."

I acquiesced and withdrawing my hand from his warm clasp arose and walked to the small table which occupied the center of the apartment, beneath the gas jet, and began writing. This was the beginning of my friend's season of melancholy. During the days that followed he has grown more and more repressed, much to my anxiety and distress. Now he speaks but seldom, and goes out but little. He has talked with the girl, who seems to impress him so strangely, but I have never seen her, although I have made several efforts toward that end, even remaining in the room several mornings in succession, expecting she would come to make it up, but for some reason she has failed to do so, and I have been disappointed. When I go out then she attends to the necessary duties. The thought flashed upon my mind one day that she was purposely avoiding me. I mentioned my suspicion to Roger.

"Why should she wish to avoid you?" he asked, by way of reply.

I confessed myself at a loss to know.

"It is purely accidental," he remarked. "Some day you will meet her."

"Have you learned anything in reference to her early life—her name, or the causes that brought her here?" I questioned.

"I have not asked her," he replied. "I would not wish to appear curious. You know I am rather delicate about intruding upon the confidence of a stranger, more especially a lady," he added.

I made no further remark, and the subject was dropped.

A peculiar thing happened me last night. I have thought of it several times during the day, and, somehow, cannot



drive it from my mind. I had retired and had been asleep and was in a state of semi-slumber, when there appeared, or seemed to appear, near my bed side the figure of a woman, robed in black. The room being in darkness, I could not distinguish her features, but from certain familiar movements oft noted in the past, I recognized my wife—Ethel!

The apparition startled me. With a hasty movement I sprang from the bed and made toward her, but when I reached the spot where I had thought she stood I found it unoccupied. She was not there.

I lighted the gas and found the room as it had been when I had retired; the door fastened, everything in order.

I confess I felt startled. What could it have been? Had something occurred to my wife and was this her spirit, come to haunt me?"

Becoming thoroughly awake, I drove this idea from my mind, and again sought slumber, which came to me after a time. I related the circumstance to Roger this morning. After absorbing the details, he looked thoughtful and said:

"A strange occurrence, surely; but, my dear Henry, I am inclined to think you were not awake when you fancied you beheld this figure, but dreaming. Some of these visions of the night are peculiarly realistic and consequently startling! Do you not agree with me?"

It appeared too real to have been a dream, but there was no other way of explaining it, and so I accepted his theory.

Was it a dream, or a warning? Does Ethel think of me?

Ah me! Is she near me? If we could but live over again the days that are gone forever.

My morning walk was longer than usual to-day. My



mind felt disturbed from the occurrence of the night, and exercise is a wholesome tonic for depression, and so I walked quite a distance and it was nearly noon when I returned.

I found Roger much excited when I entered the room.

"The girl has just left me," he cried, recognizing my step as I entered, "and she was not alone. There was a strange woman with her, and oh, Henry, this stranger I have known in the past. She is my past; 'twas she who was my life, my love!"

I stared at him in blank surprise. For the first time in all the years we had been associated, inseparable, loving friends and companions, Roger had spoken of a phase in his life I had not even thought of. Had love wrecked his life as it had my own?

Eagerly I grasped his hand, on my knees beside him.

"Tell me," I besought him, "tell me of her."

Silently and firmly he clasped my hand. Slowly the tears forced themselves from out his sightless eyes, then, with a sigh, the excited manner all gone, he replied:

"To-night, dear friend, more than brother, you shall know my story. A strange influence urges me to tell you. To-night you shall know all."

And so I await the coming of evening.



**BOOK III.**

## THE DAWNING OF A NEW DAY.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE DARKEST HOUR.

"And so I await the coming of evening." Repeating the words unconsciously aloud, the detective turns the last page of the manuscript and, leaning back in his chair, gives himself up to thought.

He begins to understand it all now—the sad, sad story of a life so full of promise, turned aside from the level path leading to a bright future, plunged into the miry depths of hopeless despondency and heart-rending despair by a woman's thoughtless step, reveals to him much that was hidden, throws a light upon the mystery which has surrounded the horrible ending of Roger Deveaux's life.

The evening had come, the story had been told and then, and then—had come the end. But how?

Mrs. Branscombe is no other than the false wife of Lorraine Herschel; Rachel Adler, the daughter he so fondly loves; Henry Allen, the wronged husband, and Roger Deveaux, who but the half brother, Ralph Dean, whose boyish infatuation for the companion of his early life has brought about the whole sad, horrible affair!

But how had he met his death? Could the brother, sit-



ting by his side, drinking in the words that fell from his lips, wrought up to an unconquerable frenzy, have turned upon him and really committed the deed?

When the knowledge gradually dawned upon him that Roger Deveau, his dearly loved companion, he who had formed a part of his unhappy life for so many years, he who had brought peace and a promise of a happy future, was Ralph Dean, the guilty half brother, had the love turned to hate, even as in the past, when the demon of revenge had entered his soul and taken supreme possession of him? Had it conquered him again, caused him to take the life of his helpless companion while in a frenzy of rage? Was Lorraine Herschel actually guilty?

This question the detective cannot answer satisfactorily to his mind. Slowly he goes back over the whole affair—the discovery of the body, Rachel Adler's story, the visit from the woman, Allen's or Herschel's strange anxiety to suffer imprisonment—each feature in the peculiar case he carefully reviews, and then, rising from his position of thought, says half aloud: "Rachel and this woman know the facts of the case as they are. From them I can get at the truth. If Lorraine Herschel killed his brother then I am no judge of human nature. I do not understand character, but if he did not, who did? Who is the guilty one?"

Mechanically he arranges the sheets of the manuscript, carefully rewraps them in the original paper and, taking the package, assumes his hat and leaves the room.

He is going to Barnum's hotel. Going to present himself to the wife of the man who is incarcerated within the walls of the county jail and try to learn the whole truth if she knows it, and to his mind there seems no doubt of this. She has said enough to lead him to believe she can explain it all.



He has not breakfasted, but he feels not the pangs of hunger; so wrought up is the mind of the man that bodily wants form no part of his being, his heart and brain control him; he feels he must get at the bottom of all this before he can give his attention to anything else, and so he hastens along the street, heeding not the throngs of passers-by, crowding and pushing through them, regardless of their remonstrances and angry vexation, hurries along until his eye rests upon a cab drawn up to the curb, the driver standing at his horse's head.

"Engaged?"

"No, sir," and Treadwell has taken possession of the vehicle and is soon being driven to the hotel he has left but a few hours before, closely clasping the important packet to his breast, inwardly fuming that the horse cannot go faster.

The longest journey has its ending and Barnum's is finally reached. Throwing the driver his fare with something extra, the detective springs up the staircase to the room occupied by the whilom Mrs. Branscombe.

"She must surely be here; she would not leave while the manuscript remains in my possession." Such are the thoughts that flash through his brain as he climbs the stairs.

Breathless he pauses before the door of room 32.

Tap-tap! he applies his knuckles. Yes, some one is within; footsteps are heard; the key turns in the lock, and the door opens. Rachel Adler stands before him. She turns pale when she recognizes the visitor, dark circles surround her soft, gray eyes. She looks care-worn and anxious.

"Well?" she articulates.

"Mrs. Branscombe?" inquires the detective.



"She is quite ill," murmurs the girl, sadly, reproachfully.

"Permit him to enter," a weak voice from within the apartment calls out, and the girl, obeying, opens the door still wider and stands aside, while Treadwell, feeling half ashamed and strangely diffident for him, enters. He understands why Mrs. Branscombe is ill. He can explain the dark circles which mar the beauty of the girl's expressive eyes. His action in securing the packet has brought it all about, and he regrets the necessity which forced him to make use of the means, although he is persuaded it was all for the best.

The apartment is in a state of semi-darkness as he enters, the shades are drawn, and the odor of camphor can be faintly detected.

As his eyes grow accustomed to the half light, he perceives that the woman he has come to see is occupying a low rocker, a bandage about her head, a blanket thrown around her. He hesitates, hat in hand, standing about the center of the apartment.

The woman speaks.

"You have come to see me, Mr. Treadwell?" she says in a low tone.

"Yes; I wish to ask you a few questions," he replies.

A sigh wells up from her breast.

"Do you not know enough?" she murmurs faintly.

He advances a step toward her, his face flushing.

"Pardon me for adopting a means of gaining possession of your secret which may not appear honorable nor fair," he begins hurriedly, "but consider, madam, the exigencies of the position; put yourself in my place. I am a detective officer. It is my duty to unravel the truth, and any means are justifiable when the life of a fellow man is at stake."



He pauses. She is breathing rapidly, her eyes fixed upon his face, her lips parted.

"Go on," comes from her lips.

"You came to me and asked me to help you save Henry Allen's life. You refused to explain certain matters. I had already sworn to know the truth and save him, if possible, not believing him guilty. As you would not make me your confidant, I determined to learn all without you—against your wishes, if need be. Providence has aided me." Here his voice softens and a tremor of sympathy can be detected as he proceeds. "I know the sad story. I have read it all; but the end was not written. I have come to you to supply that which is lacking. Will you?"

A sob bursts from her lips, succeeded by another, ending in a burst of passionate tears, which brings the girl to her side.

She kneels at her feet, and in her sweet voice says pleadingly:

"Do not distress yourself, my darling mother. Do not grieve; it is perhaps all for the best. Do not blame Mr. Treadwell; he has but done that which he considered his duty. He has acted for the best."

"God knows I have, Miss," breaks in the man. "I would not willfully cause you sorrow. Its black shadow has already encompassed you enough in the past. I want to save you from future unhappiness. My desire is to bring about a happier period for you all!"

The white hand of the mother rests lovingly, caressingly upon the head of the child. With an effort she controls her grief and says:

"I thank you, Mr. Treadwell, for your earnest, sincere expression of a noble feeling. I have ever trusted you, even before I first met you. I have never thought you



other than a friend. Your dark suspicions wounded a heart already rent and torn by the bitter experiences of a dark past, and I had determined in the first mad impulse of a thwarted desire to attempt to ouwit you, and set you at naught. You have come off conqueror. I yield myself to circumstances."

"And you will tell me the rest—complete the story?" he cries eagerly.

She looks up into his eyes, sadly, thoughtfully.

"Why not?" she replies. "You already know the rest. I cannot see in what I should now be gainer by withholding the knowledge which, I will admit, is mine; besides, I can understand that in order to clear the name of Lorraine Herschel, my—husband" (so sadly, almost fearfully, she mentions the name) "from stain. The truth must be known, and I alone can furnish it. But before I proceed I must exact a promise from you." She pauses.

"I will pledge you my word to anything which in honor comes within my power," he assures her.

She thanks him with her eyes.

"It is this," she says slowly. "This dark, shameful secret is known only to my husband, my daughter, yourself and me. What I shall tell you will suffice to free the heart-broken man, who even now is laboring under a false impression, and is plunged into the depths of despair from its effects. Need the story be known? Will it be necessary for you to divulge it to others? Can you not promise me you will keep it locked within your breast?"

She has half risen from her reclining position, her voice and gestures eager, supplicating.

Daniel Treadwell does not reply at once. He cannot divine what she has to tell, does not know what bearing it will have upon the case. Finally he says slowly, weighing his words:



"If what you have to tell me does away with the necessity of dragging your secret into the courts, I pledge you my word of honor, as a gentleman and a true man, that I will die sooner than have it go any farther."

She sinks back in her chair with a sigh of relief.

"I thank you," she murmurs, "for now I can feel that there may yet be a hope for something brighter in the future. The sin has been committed, the sinners punished—ah, so severely—but the knowledge of the black stain, the shame of it all, can be hidden from the world, although its baneful effects must rankle in the hearts of the culprits forever. You will not need to divulge what you have learned; forget it, if you can. Listen and learn how Roger Deveaux, as he called himself, Ralph Dean, whom he really was, met his untimely end."

She pauses, her breath coming and going fitfully; then, her arm about the neck of the kneeling girl, her eyes fixed vacantly upon the opposite wall, she murmurs, as if to herself:

"This is my darkest hour."

The true-hearted officer advances a step toward her and, occupying a chair but a few feet from that in which she is reclining, replies softly:

"It is said that the darkest hour is the one that precedes dawn. A brighter day is coming, Mrs. Herschel; depend on it."

"God grant it," she cries, casting a look of earnest supplication above her; and the lips of the kneeling maiden form the one word:

"Amen."



## CHAPTER XXX.

## "A RAY OF LIGHT."

Without further hesitation, the wife of Lorraine Herschel begins:

"You have read my husband's version of the almost unpardonable act of which I was guilty," speaking in a low, even, but somewhat hurried tone, "but I would tell you, Mr. Treadwell, before proceeding farther, that I am innocent of the baser sin he has laid at my door. I have never forgotten my honor for one single moment since the unhappy hour I crossed the threshold of our home and put happiness from me.

"I loved Ralph. I need not deny it. I do not attempt to, and, taking everything into consideration, what is there to excite wonder in the fact that I, a young, innocent girl, knowing absolutely nothing of the world outside our family circle, should grow to love the inseparable companion of my early life?

"With Lorraine the feeling was of a different nature. I loved him, but not in the same way I looked upon Ralph. To begin with, he was ten years my senior, and as a child I looked up to him as children will to those of a more mature age, as a being possessed of greater information and power. I was but a child when he entered college, and as the years rolled by, bringing him seldom home to visit us, it is but natural that I should cease to think of him, even as I had in the past, and devote almost the entire affection



of my years of dawning womanhood upon his half brother, who was ever at my side.

“Marriage had never been mentioned between us. In our happy, careless, peaceful existence the thought of a day of separation never occurred to either of us. We were children, even up to the age when wisdom begins to come to most of mankind. Ralph was just as much of a boy at nineteen as he had been at ten, and I at the same age could detect no difference in myself, save that of a greater power to enjoy the blissful life which we followed. The first thought of a change in after life was given me by my mother some months before she left me. While we were alone one day she spoke of the time when my girlhood would cease and the responsibilities of marriage rest upon me.

“‘It has always been my desire that you should wed Lorraine,’ she told me. ‘He loves you, I know, and will soon be in a position to offer you a happy home. When he speaks to you upon this subject you will understand it all.’

“For some reason I felt saddened; not particularly at the prospect of a marriage with Lorraine—at that time it never occurred to me that it would make any great difference whom I married when the time came, just as long as it did not mean separation from those I loved. I was, as you can understand, woefully ignorant. Time brought knowledge and with it a bitter experience. It was the thought that old age must come to me that caused my mother’s words to cast a shadow over my young heart. Sorrow seemed to rest upon all of those who were aged that I had ever known; gray hairs and wrinkles and failing sight seemed their portion, and it came to me in the first few moments that I one day must be the same as they,



and the cloud descended upon me, darkening the summer sky of my bright existence. But it did not remain long, and in a short time I had forgotten it all, continuing on, happy, peaceful, joyous.

"The death of my mother was the first blow that came to change my life. I loved her so, and it seemed to me at the time that I could never recover from the effects of it. Lorraine was with us, and his gentle, unobtrusive sympathy made him very dear to me. He was so kind, so thoughtful. Ralph being at college, I was naturally brought into a closer relationship with him than I had been for many years, and so, when he proposed marriage to me, he found my heart yearning for some one to fill the place left vacant by my mother's death. Her words returned to me, and, realizing that it would have made her happy to have seen me the wife of this noble man, I accepted him.

"I did not mention the circumstance to Ralph in my letters to him. I supposed Lorraine would inform him, and really gave it no thought. I did not know how he loved me, had no suspicion that he, too, desired me for his wife. If he had spoken to me in time all the misery and shame of the succeeding years would have been averted, but alas, he failed to do so, and when my kind protector passed away, leaving me with no one to look to, I became the wife of the man whose life I have darkened. It is needless for me to go over the particulars of my brief married life. You are already in possession of the facts. You, understanding my feeling for Ralph, can comprehend the effect of his letter upon me, that letter unwillingly given me by my husband. It opened my eyes. I then for the first time knew how much he loved me, and the thought that that love had driven him away,



had brought about our separation, filled my heart with a sorrow profound and lasting.

"The birth of my darling," pausing to caress the shining hair of the girl, "brought about a change. The great love of my soul became centered in the helpless little one, and to Lorraine, the father, my husband, I turned with a deeper affection than I had felt for him since reading Ralph's unhappy letter.

"I became happy again; my life seemed unbroken by a thought of sorrow, and it would have probably continued had it not been that Ralph, unable to longer exist without hearing from me, wrote me a long, wild, erratic letter, eagerly requesting a reply.

"I acceded to his request and then began a correspondence, unknown to Lorraine, that led me to take the step that has ruined the lives of three and brought about the untimely end of one."

She pauses, unable to proceed, for the tears that are forcing themselves from out her eyes.

The detective remains silent for a moment and then says, hopefully:

"The end has not come. Although the past has been unfortunate, marked by misery, shame and ruin, the future yet remains for you three. One has gone, true; but your husband, your daughter are still left to you, and she is already with you. He——"

"I fear he may not return to me," she hastily interrupts. "He is so unforgiving. He has been carried away by dark suspicions that have tended to make matters ever so much worse. I fear he will not listen to an explanation."

"I will assume that task, my mother," speaks the girl. "He will listen to me."

A ray of hope illumines the face of the mother.



"God grant it," she murmurs, and then, with a sigh, says: "But I must continue my narrative. I have already made it long and tedious."

Treadwell awaits her pleasure and in a short time she proceeds:

"The act of leaving home was purely an impulsive one. I had just received Ralph's imploring letter and all of the love of my youth returned to me. It seemed increased ten-fold. I felt that I could not live without him, and without stopping to consider the result, I wrote that cruel letter that turned my husband's tender heart to stone, and, making hasty preparations, turned my back on that peaceful home, and began the journey to the man who loved me, and—whom I loved.

"I secured the money which I knew my husband had left in his desk. I intended returning it later. In my haste I did not stop to consider anything; rashly, impulsively, I desired to be with Ralph to soothe him, to bring him peace and happiness. I did not pause to think of the effect of my act upon Lorraine; that never came to me until I was far on my way, and then I resolved to return. Yes, I had fully determined to go back to him; but even while the thought found lodgment in my brain, there came another. Lorraine had probably returned home by that time and so knew all. With a feeling of heartrending remorse I began to realize that I could not face him, knowing that my letter had been read by him, the letter in which I had said, 'I do not love you.'

"No, I must continue on the way I had taken. I would go to Ralph and accept the consequences. Then, like a ray of hope, came another idea. I could go to Ralph and persuade him to return with me, give up his unhappy life away from us, and become a member of our family circle.



I would explain my hasty action to my husband, confess my sin, and ask his forgiveness. I felt that it would be granted, and we would be happy again. Perhaps my hasty step might prove to be for the best, after all; it might be the means of reuniting the brothers and bring about the peace and joy of former years.

"This fancy brought me comfort, and when I arrived at my journey's end and found Ralph waiting for me upon the platform of the station (I had telegraphed him of my coming from a point along the route) I lost no time in unfolding my plan to him after the first greetings were over with, and we had reached his comfortable home.

"At first he appeared thoughtful.

"How can I go to him after this?" he said, his brows set in thought.

"Lorraine is generous and kind. He will hear us, and, knowing all, forgive us. Christ forgave the sins and weaknesses of others. Lorraine is a servant of the Master,' I replied.

"It was finally arranged that we should return together, and the day following was passed in making preparations toward that end. That night Lorraine came."

Here she pauses again for a moment, but continues almost immediately:

"You know, Mr. Treadwell, of the terrible events of that night. I never expected to behold my husband in such a state of demoniacal rage; he was not at all like himself. He must have been crazed. We could not explain; he would not listen. He seemed bent on destroying both Ralph and myself, a fiend incarnate seemed to possess him, and his frenzied actions brought about the destruction of all, placed us beyond the possibility of retraction. My action was cruel, heartless; his proceeding was devil-



ish. Yet, I cannot blame him. I do not wish to justify my position nor shift the blame upon him. I regret the results, have paid a hundred-fold the penalty of my thoughtlessness.

"In the fire, which burned the house, Ralph lost his eyesight. He was severely burned in trying to save me. I will bear the mark of it to my grave." Here the tears begin to fall again. With difficulty she represses them and goes hurriedly on.

"For weeks we were obliged to remain in seclusion; then, at Ralph's request, I began looking for an asylum for the blind.

" 'We must separate,' he said sadly. 'God has sorely punished us. You had best return to your home; it will never be known that you left it, save in an ordinary way. Lorraine and the child have perished; you and I alone are left—I, God helping me, a better man. Devote your future to the care of the poor and needy. I shall become a teacher of the blind when I first am taught.'

"I did not attempt to dissuade him. I felt heartbroken and weary of life, and it made no difference to me what became of me, what my future might be, and so I obeyed him and in a week he became an inmate of the asylum at Buffalo, while I returned to the home I had deserted and left desolate but a few short weeks before. The years that followed brought me little but remorse and deep despair. I need not review them. You know most of the circumstances of my connection with the story of my husband's life, and that is what we are aiming to make clear. I will pass briefly to the day when I found my darling in Miss Walton's seminary at Russellville, Kentucky. My meeting with her was purely accidental. When I had lost her in England I was almost heartbroken. I recognized the



hand of my husband in her abduction, and felt that God had willed it that he should discover her. Although frantic with grief, I resolved to give her up. I had ruined the prospects and wrecked the life of her father; was it not right that he should obtain some happiness through his child? And so, after a severe struggle, I resigned myself to abide by the will of 'Him who ruleth all things well,' and returned to the United States, where I secluded myself among the mountains of New York, a sad, broken-hearted woman.

"The desire to return to the world, to be among those of human kind again, came to me one day, and with it a feeling that I should feel more content among children and growing girls, where I could instruct and teach them to love me; in fact, to make something of a life hitherto wasted. I would endeavor to secure a position as teacher in some institution for young ladies.

"This resolve led me to Russellville, and there I met my darling one after all these years; but alas, my mother's love got the best of my judgment. I felt that I must make myself known to her, and, an opportunity presenting itself, I did so, with the result that you already know. I was not instrumental in Rachel's departure from the school. I did not urge her to leave, but she, knowing the sad story of my life (I told her the principal facts while there) felt an abhorrence of meeting her school companions after that, and so, without a thought of the rash step, she was taking, determined to go out upon the world. I shudder to think what would have been her fate; but that Providence who has watched over our lives through it all directed her aright and brought her to me.

"I chanced to be a passenger upon the train that bore her from Russellville. I saw her when she entered the



car, pale and anxious, and when we were some miles away I approached her, my heart filled with thankfulness that we were together.

"At first she shrank from me, but I finally succeeded in overcoming her foolish fancies and she consented to remain with me.

"I took her to Cincinnati, where we remained in seclusion for several months, and then, feeling confident that we would not be discovered, I began a search for my husband. I had determined to go to him, and, working through his love for Rachel, endeavor to bring about a reconciliation.

"Our search was a long one. He had adopted the plan of stopping at secluded hotels in the cities he visited with his blind companion—poor, dear Ralph, and this rendered our task a difficult one, but at last we found them in this city. They were stopping at Brown's hotel, and had been there but a few days. Rachel was successful in securing a menial position in the house. We felt that, being near them, in time she could make herself known and bring about the result we both so earnestly desired; but that natural diffidence which forms a conspicuous trait of her character held her back, although she became acquainted with<sup>1</sup> Ralph and in a short time would have brought about a meeting with her father. Her duties in the hotel were rather more than she could accomplish, and so I assisted her, coming to the house in the early morning between the hours of five and seven and remaining there, doing what I could without discovery, until the work was completed. Sometimes I would remain with her at night—her apartment was in a remote part of the building, and I was comparatively free from the danger of discovery. One day, at her solicitation, I accompanied her to the



room occupied by Lorraine and Ralph. For the first time in long years I gazed upon the scarred face of the companion of my youth. The tears came to my eyes as I looked upon his sightless orbs, and that remorse, which had become to a great extent quieted, arose again to torment me. I spoke to him, and my voice betrayed me; he partly arose from the chair he was occupying and put out his hands as if to take me in his arms. The movement was an unconscious one, I know; but it proved to me that he still loved me, and fearful of further betraying myself, I hastened from the room, and none too soon, for I had barely reached the hall when the sound of approaching footsteps reached us from the stairs and Rachel, crying half aloud in a frightened voice, exclaimed: 'Mr. Allen—father—is returning!' I opened the door of the room adjoining and entered it, while Rachel, springing across the hall, found a hiding place in an alcove. I heard him enter the room, and the conversation that followed informed me that my suspicions had not been without foundation. Ralph had recognized my voice, had felt my presence.

"I heard him promise to tell the story of his past to his companion; that night all would be known, Lorraine would hear the truth and know that Roger Deveau was Ralph Dean, his half brother.

"What would come of it? I dreaded to conjecture. Might not he turn upon his helpless companion—his blind brother—even as he had upon me in the past? Might not the slumbering demon within him become aroused, and urge him on to some mad act of vengeance?

"I trembled with apprehension, feeling thankful, however, that I had overheard them, determining to be near during the relation of Ralph's history, and prevent any scene of violence.



"I did not take Rachel into my confidence. Why alarm her unnecessarily? I felt competent to check any outbreak, even if it came, and, perchance, I would not be called upon to make my presence known. I left my hiding place and the house, but returned at nightfall, and telling Rachel I wished to go to the room I had occupied in the morning—the one next to the fatal room 47—I left her without vouchsafing an explanation, promising to return soon.

"I hurried through the dark hall-ways until I stood before the door of room 45. Cautiously turning the knob, I opened the door and entered. The room was in total darkness, or at least appeared so at first, but upon glancing toward the ceiling, I detected a ray of light piercing the gloom—a bright, radiant arrow, proceeding from the adjoining room, forcing its way through an aperture of some character, and explaining why I had been enabled to overhear the conversation of the morning so distinctly.

"Investigating, I found the light came through a round hole, about one inch in diameter, probably a gas pipe, or something of a like nature, had at one time penetrated the wall, and when removed had left the opening which for some reason had never been filled up nor covered over.

"It was some two feet over my head. I was obliged to stand upon a chair, in order to ascertain its character, and standing there I applied my eye to the opening and found, to my satisfaction, that it afforded me a view of the interior of room 47. I could both see and hear, and thus came to me the knowledge which I will now relate, and which will clear away the mystery surrounding the death of Ralph Dean.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

## THE SKY GROWS BRIGHTER.

Pausing, Mrs. Herschel (as we must now call her) requests a glass of water; her voice has grown hoarse, and her lips seem parched.

The girl hastens to obey her, resuming her kneeling position, having satisfied her mother's demands.

Treadwell awaits the development with bated breath; he now pities this woman more than ever. He has heard the other side of the story, and recognizes the fact that she is not all to blame in the matter. Her action has been more thoughtless than criminal, a rash step, impulsively taken. Refreshed by the draught, the wife proceeds:

"Ralph had begun, when I assumed my position, and I could see by the expression upon Lorraine's face that he was deeply interested, the passing emotions of his mind being demonstrated through the ever-changing expression of his eyes. Ralph was talking slowly, his voice sad, the muscles of his face twitching. Lorraine held his right hand in his own; it was his usual custom, as you have learned by reading this narrative, and only means of communication with his companion.

"I could hear every word. The speaker was relating the happy days of youth, and as the words fell from his lips, I could see that my husband had begun to suspicion what was coming. The truth was beginning to dawn upon him.

"Finally, his face pale and set, his eyes fairly burning, a



stern, hard rigidity of lips denoting a fearful struggle going on within, he checked the speaker, and I could tell by the movements of his fingers that he was asking him a question.

"The reply came:

" 'No, my name is not Roger Deveau,' fell from the lips of the other. 'You shall know it soon. Be patient, dear Henry.'

"Again the quick, agile fingers began their work.

" 'Why should you wish to know at once?' asked Ralph; 'and, Henry, you are agitated; you are nervous; what is the matter?' turning his blind eyes upon him.

"The white hand of Lorraine again clasped that of his companion, evidently persisting in his inquiry.

" 'You shall know then,' slowly said Ralph. 'My name is Ralph Dean; that of my brother, Lorraine Herschel.'

"God spare me from ever witnessing such another scene of anguish as that my eyes then rested upon. As the words struck upon the ear of Lorraine, he started back in awful despair, dropping the hand of his brother, and covering his eyes with both his own, sprang to his feet, his body writhing with suppressed agony. Backward, forward, the width of the room, he paced, like an enraged lion, poor blind Ralph, sitting silently moving his head from side to side as the sound of his companion's steps informed him of his position.

"Amazement was plainly depicted upon his face, which at last found utterance.

" 'Henry, my dearly loved companion, where are you? Why have you left my side?' he cried, anxiously. At his words Lorraine halted suddenly, his hands dropped to his side, and I could see his face. It was as one cut in marble, white, horrified, looking ghastly beneath the snow-white



hair of his head, in the bright light of the gas jet.

"For a moment he paused, and then slowly approached his companion, until he stood almost over him. Feeling him near him, Ralph put out his hands to touch him, his face so sad, growing more anxious and alarmed.

"At the gesture Lorraine stepped aside, shuddering and nervously twitching his fingers; putting out his hand to steady himself, it rested upon the table.

"I saw him start, take up something from the table, and then turn toward his blind, anxious companion. I cast one horrified glance at the object he held within his grasp.

"It was a razor—open, the light shining upon the bright blade. I saw the demon in his eyes, and feared the horrible sequel might come without my being able to prevent it, but at that moment Ralph spoke again, rising from his chair.

"‘Dear Henry, you alarm me,’ he said, going toward him. ‘Has aught in my story, as far as you have heard it, taken you back to your unhappy past, reviving memories that have brought about this agitation which I can feel is possessing you? Come, dear old man, tell me.’

"The razor fell from the hand of my husband, his bosom swelled with grief almost beyond description. With one heart-rending glance into the face of the man he loved better than life, his only companion for years, who was slowly groping his way toward him, he turned aside, avoiding him, and opening the door of the apartment, rushed out into the hall. I heard his hurried footsteps growing fainter. I ran to the door, and opening it, listened; yes, he was descending the stairs.

"Without a thought of the consequences, I ran into the room he had just left. There stood the helpless, afflicted man in the center of the apartment, one hand outstretched



as if to grasp some object, the other extended in a gesture of surprise. Hearing my steps, he turned his startled face upon me.

“‘Ah, you have returned,’ he cried. ‘Why did you leave me so suddenly?’ I began to feel decidedly alarmed. ‘It is not your companion,’ I said, hurriedly. ‘It is I—Ethel. Oh, Ralph! Oh, Ralph!’ His face became suffused with radiance.

“‘Ethel,’ he murmured. ‘Has he, Henry, found you and sent you to me? Is that why he became so agitated, and left the room so hurriedly?’

“‘No, no!’ I cried, my heart beating with a strange feeling of coming evil. ‘No, Ralph, that is not it. Oh, can you not surmise. do you not know who Henry Allen, your companion, really is?’

Wondering amazement rapidly gave place to a growing sense of realization. His lips grew pale, his breath began to grow short and labored.

“‘Who is Henry Allen?’ he demanded at last, his voice sounding unreal, hoarse and unnatural.

“‘Oh, that I should be the one to tell you!’ I cried in agony of spirit; ‘but you must know; it will all come soon. Ralph, Henry Allen is your brother, my husband, Lorraine Herschel.’

“For a moment he stood motionless, his face stern and set, staring out from his sightless eyes into darkness. Then, as it all dawned upon him, he staggered and would have fallen had not his hand seized the edge of the table, which supported him.

“At last his lips began to move, his head to sway—I standing powerless to move, watching him as if spell-bound.

“‘Lorraine, Lorraine—the man I wronged in the past. I



thought him dead. I have mourned him for years. Lorraine, my brother—my suffering brother, and I have done it all; and Rachel, why, she is his child, your child; she lives as well. This is too much. Oh, God, why have I lived to know the suffering, the untold misery I have brought upon the man who has been my dearly loved friend for years? Why have I lived to know it? Would to God I could die. I no longer wish to live.'

"Unconsciously in his anguish his hand kept groping about the table, and at last fell upon the razor dropped by Lorraine.

" 'Ah, the means is at hand,' he cried, his face lighting up. 'Farewell, Ethel. Good-by, Lorraine. God forgive me.'

"Before I could stop him he had drawn the shining blade across his white throat, the blood gushed forth in a crimson stream, and with a gasp and a horrible gurgling sound, he fell upon the floor before me—dead!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Quick! Some water. She is fainting," cried the detective, springing forward to the aid of the exhausted woman, who, turning deathly pale, sways and falls forward.

He catches her in his arms while the girl, alarmed and giving evidence of great anxiety, hurries to the commode and obtains the water and the bottle of camphor.

A few minutes suffices to restore the fainting woman to consciousness. Gently removing his supporting arm, Treadwell resumes his chair, saying:

"If you feel too weak to continue the recital, dear Mrs. Herschel, do not attempt it. The mystery is now clear to my mind, and the rest can wait."

Faintly, her voice trembling, she replies:

"No. It is best to complete that which I have begun,"



then, with a wan smile, "I am not subject to fainting spells, as they are termed. I did not give way when the horrible event occurred," shuddering. "It came so suddenly that it was all over, and poor Ralph beyond earthly hope before I had begun to realize what he had done." Her voice dies away in a weary, whispering tone.

Treadwell sits silently gazing upon her pale, beautiful face. How this woman has suffered; how much more suffering she has brought others—and the end is not yet. Has the future anything in store for her but continued and life-long sorrow? Will the clouds of adversity ever pass away? He cannot surmise, but his sympathies are keenly active, and he has resolved that now that he knows all of the circumstances, his work for the near future is laid out, his plans formed, and to the object of bringing this separated family together, to bring about a reconciliation between husband and wife, with the assistance of the girl, who, he feels, will be of vast service in this project. She speaks again, this weak, beautiful woman; her words break in upon the meditations of the honest-hearted detective.

"I must conclude," she is saying. "You do not know why Lorraine, innocent of the crime, is suffering imprisonment, and at his own desire and solicitation, and, believe me, Mr. Treadwell, this is the hardest part of the entire sad story for me to tell, but it is important that you should know all, in order to thoroughly comprehend my position.

"As Ralph fell to the floor, the razor with which he had rashly ended his life, fell from his hand, directly at my feet. For the moment I stood transfixed with horror, unable to move, or even cry out, and then, without any clearly defined motive in view, stooped and picked up the blood-stained implement.



"It was an act of unconscious intent. I scarcely knew I had done so.

"At that moment the door was flung hastily open, and Lorraine entered the room! He saw me first, and his burning eyes rested full upon my face, with a dark, suspicious, inquiring glance. I cannot even imagine his thoughts. I shudder when I recall that glance.

"Then, looking past me, he saw the body of the man he loved. With a rapid gesture he waved me aside. Unconsciously I obeyed him, and then, approaching the corpse, he fell upon his knees, raised the dear head, gazed long upon the ghastly face, and quivering, trembling with an emotion which he could not express, gave vent to a sorrow so deep and profound that the memory of it almost prevents me from relating it. Oh, God, how he must have suffered. Again and yet again, he pressed his lips to the lifeless lips—the blood staining his hands and clothing. Silently I stood gazing upon his anguish and then, unable to restrain myself—I believe I should have gone mad to have remained longer silent—spoke his name:

" 'Lorraine!'

"With a quick, impetuous motion, he laid the body upon the floor, and springing to his feet confronted me. Again his eyes darted an inquiry, but before I could reply, fell upon the instrument of death I still held in my hand.

"For one brief, terrible moment, he stared, and then, his face blanched, his expressive features conveying the awful thought that had entered his brain, he slowly raised his hand and pointed to the razor.

"In my agony of terror I could not speak. My tongue seemed paralyzed, my throat parched and dry.

"He waited for me to speak. I essayed to say something, but could not; then, as if fully persuaded that his



suspensions were correct, he cast one glance upon the corpse, and with his hand upraised, directed one accusing finger full in my face, repeating the gesture again and again.

"At last my tongue obeyed me. 'No, no!' I cried, 'I am not guilty of this crime. No, no, Lorraine. You cannot surely believe that my hand destroyed him.'

"Falling upon my knees at his feet, I clasped my arms about his knees, sobbing, almost crazed.

"I felt his hands upon me, gently assisting me to rise, and upon looking into his eyes, saw that they were filled with tears. Sadly pointing to the razor, which I still held, but which I flung aside at his gesture, he slowly shook his head, and turning from me, mechanically walked toward the door.

"I quickly followed him.

" 'Hear me, Lorraine,' I cried. 'Hear me. I have been guilty of wrong in the past, but not of this horrible deed. For God's sake, hear me.' He gave no evidence of having heard me, only slowly walked away.

"Rapid footsteps in the hall warned me that some one was approaching. He also heard them, and made a motion as though to close the door. Before he could do so, however, a slight form came in view, and with a sensation of immeasurable dismay, I recognized Rachel.

"She had become alarmed at my long absence, and had come to find what had occasioned it.

"He saw her at the same moment, and in an instant recognized her. With one stride he gained her side, the next moment had clasped her in his arms, and was raining kisses upon her face, and then, casting her almost roughly from him, rushed past me to the table.

"I followed his movements with my eyes. Saw him take



from the drawer in the table a package of manuscript. With one stride he had reached my side, and forcing the packet into my hands, rushed like a madman out into the hall, and left me standing staring at the papers, Rachel looking in absolute bewilderment about her.

"I approached her, and took her hand, saying:

" 'For God's sake, darling, come with me, far from this accursed spot. We must not remain here longer. Come.'

"Without a remonstrance, acting as one just aroused from sleep, she obeyed me, and hurrying along the dark passageway, we soon reached her room, the scenes I had passed through passing and repassing in rapid review through my troubled brain.

"In the dusk of early morning I left the house, Rachel remaining, as I deemed it best that she should do so for a few days at least, until I could see what would come of it all.

"I have now told you all, Mr. Treadwell—the story is complete; the sequel"—her voice grows weak and wavers as she essays to speak—"rests with God."

With a sigh she sinks back in her chair, and silence falls upon them all.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

## "THE CLOUDS DISPELLED."

"And he, thinking you guilty, has given himself up to shield you and his child from the shame and disgrace."

The silence is broken by these words from Treadwell.

The woman faintly bows an affirmative.

"Even willing to die for you," and the words of the suffering man return to him—those written words, accompanied by the silent evidence of despair and a weariness of life.

"If you are my friend, let me die," and then, in a soft whisper, he murmurs as if to himself:

"Noble heart—noble heart."

"You must understand the meaning of my strange words that night I called upon you," says the woman, "when I told you I wished to save Henry Allen's life. They had a double meaning. He would surely pay the penalty of this supposed crime if the truth was not told, and if it was, the shame would kill him."

"Yes, yes, I can see it all now. How sad, how unfortunate," then, after a moment spent in careful, keen review, he says:

"Although you have supplied the final chapter to the story, and I know you have spoken truly, yet there are some things as yet unexplained, and these very things, simple as they are, would to my mind stand in the way of your husband's release."



She arouses herself at his words, a startled look of inquiry in her dark eyes, while the girl rises to her feet and gazes anxiously upon him.

"I do not understand," begins the suffering woman.

The detective hastens to reassure her.

"You may be able to make it all clear," he says. "In your haste you may have forgotten it. Perhaps you do not know"—then quickly—"you left the room through the door?"

"Yes."

"You did not lock it."

The face of the girl turns pale.

"No," wonderingly.

"Yet your daughter found it locked in the morning, or"—turning to her—"did you return and lock it?"

"No, no!" cries the girl. "It was fastened from the inside."

"There was the fire escape," remarks Treadwell. "It would have been an easy matter for you to have gained access to the room by that means, locked the door from the inside, and then have left by the same means."

The fair face flushes, the gray eyes assume a look of quiet dignity.

"If such had been the case, I should have said so, Mr. Treadwell," she says, firmly. "I have not attempted to deceive you. The account I gave you the morning of the discovery was a truthful one, as far as it went. I only omitted the circumstance of my going to the room the night before and what occurred there. I did that to shield my mother. You understand, of course, that I knew nothing of the death of Mr. Deveaux—or Uncle Ralph—until I had entered the room with Mr. Seabrooke in the morning, and the awful fact was made known. My mother did



not take me into her confidence; I surmised that something terrible had happened. I saw the blood upon my mother's hands when we had returned to my room. It came from the stained razor which she had held, but supposing she had in some way inflicted an injury sufficient to wound her, I refrained from questioning her, and not until the morning had I any suspicion of the truth.

"When the body was found, and I saw the blood stains upon the bed clothing, then, naturally, my mind associated circumstances, and I fainted."

"You believed your mother guilty of the crime," cries the detective, while the eyes of the woman grew sad and reproachful.

"Yes," the girl makes reply; "at first the horror of it all overcame me. I had no time to think."

"And to shield her you withheld the circumstances upon my first examination?"

"Yes. Can you censure or blame me?" The question comes with quiet dignity.

Treadwell relapses into deep thought—finally replies slowly:

"No—I do not think I really can. You acted as you thought for the best—but how came the door locked?"

"I do not know, unless Mr. Allen—my father—returned, and after locking it, took his departure by means of the fire escape."

The heavy brows of the man knit in thought.

"Hardly likely," he mutters, "and then, there is the money."

"The money?" cries the mother and girl in unison.

"Yes—why—you remember signing the receipt for some for Mr. Deveaux, that same morning?" inquiringly to Rachel.



"Yes, yes," she replies hastily, "but what of it? What has it to do with this?"

After a moment's thought the detective tells them of the circumstance of the money envelope, watching their faces keenly while so doing; but only surprise is depicted there, and if he has any new-formed suspicions, they vanish.

He rises to his feet.

"This is yet to be explained," he says quietly. "I will say, as well, that the weakest point in your account is the fact that you alone saw the ending of Roger Deveau's—or Ralph Dean's—life. It lacks corroboration. If I go to your husband and inform him of what I know, he, already positively convinced of your guilt, will not credit it. For years he has suffered upon your account, and really is possessed of an unreasonable feeling against you, but it is there just the same, and although he has gone to prison in your stead, it is probably as much to shield his name from disgrace as to protect you from the hand of Justice.

"Perhaps more so," interrupts the weeping woman. "It was to that desire I attributed his action."

"Now, then," continues the man slowly, as if in thought, apparently not heeding her words, "even if I go to him and say, 'You are free, I am convinced you did not commit the murder you are willing to suffer for,' how can it prove that he did not do so? Your account? When your relationship becomes known, it would not be believed by a jury, and either he or you would suffer. Even your daughter at first supposed you guilty! Is it not natural to suppose that a jury would do so?"

"Then the whole story would come out, and while that would perhaps free the man, or tend to arouse sympathy, it would fasten the suspicion of guilt probably upon you, and kill your husband."



"Yes, yes, it would—I know it would."

"I must have time to think this all over carefully," remarks Treadwell. "Remember, I am convinced of the truth of what you have told me, but it is necessary to have the facts so strong and well proven that they will prove undeniable. I wish to keep your secret from the world; have pledged you my word I would endeavor to do so, and in order to keep my pledge I must look farther."

The girl, with a quick, impulsive movement, falls upon her knees, and clasping her white hands, her eyes raised in supplication, murmurs:

"Oh, God, throw light upon this mystery. Make it all plain. Do not compel us to suffer more, for Christ's sake, Amen."

"I believe he will, Miss," cries the detective, hastily, impulsively. "I feel that He will. I must go, but when I return I will bring you good news! My heart tells me I shall be successful in explaining that which is yet dark."

Taking his hat, he hurriedly leaves the room, and in a short time the house, still clutching the packet of manuscript containing the confession. He has not put it down but one moment during all the long interview, and then only when the woman has fainted.

The pangs of hunger are beginning to make themselves known. It is nearly noon, and he has eaten nothing since the night before. So, rather unwillingly—he hates to lose even the time necessary to satisfy his craving—he enters a restaurant and makes his way to a private table, desiring to be alone.

The waiter takes his order, and while waiting for it, the detective takes up the Sun, which is lying upon the table before him, and absently glances at the front page.

The first article that attracts his attention is short, but



expresses much. It is to the effect that burglars have attempted to rob the house of a certain prominent citizen the night before, and that one of them has been shot, and is not expected to live.

"Poor devil," mutters the man. "Got it at last. Well, it comes to them all in time, either in one way or another."

He continues to read in a desultory manner, until his meal is brought him, and then attacking it vigorously, he soon disposes of the viands.

Feeling brighter and more refreshed, he is about to go when he hears some one enter the adjoining stall; two men, he can tell, as they are talking.

Scarcely knowing why he does so, the detective pauses, and remaining quiet, listens. To his ears comes a low murmur, embodying the words, "Poor Nick; he got it in the neck last night. Unfortunate devil."

"Croaked?" sententiously asks the other.

"No, not yet, but he can't live long. Do you know I'm rather leery that he'll give away the snap about the blind man in Brown's Hotel when he gets on that he can't live?"

The detective starts, and with great difficulty suppresses an exclamation.

"The blind man in Brown's Hotel."

What can he mean? What do these men know of the circumstance? In what way are they associated with it?

Ah, God is answering Rachel's prayer.

The voice of the second speaker breaks in upon his meditations.

"Nix—not so raw," it says, "some one may git on."

"You're dead right," came the reply.

Treadwell leaves the stall and proceeds to the cashier's desk, where he pays the amount due, and then, resolving to ascertain, if possible, who the two are whose brief con-



versation he has overheard, returns to the stall, and drawing aside the curtains with a quick, positive motion, enters the compartment occupied by the two.

He wishes to see their faces. His plan is eminently successful, his swift glance, sweeping the disturbed, vexed countenances, as the two look up to demand the meaning of the intrusion.

He recognizes them both, and they know him.

"Treadwell!" they exclaim in unison.

"Beg pardon," says the detective, suavely, "I thought the stall unoccupied, but seeing that we three old acquaintances have been brought together so opportunely, perhaps you will invite me to dine with you?"

The two look upon him sullenly. Finally one of them says:

"Oh, that's all guff, Tread. You don't want to peck with us. You've got something in the wind."

The detective smiles, facing them, watching them keenly.

"Well, what do you suppose it is?" he asks, banteringly. "You know I usually get you dead to rights when I start in. So you may as well come out plain. What do you think I want?"

"Blamed if I know," ejaculates the other. "There's nothin' fresh on either of us."

Fixing his eyes steadily upon that of the man before him, the detective leans forward and says, in a low, impulsive tone, "What of the blind man at Brown's Hotel?" Then, without giving him an opportunity to recover from the absolute astonishment that his words have caused, continues, "and Nick, your pal, who was shot last night?"

Both men spring to their feet.

"By heaven, Treadwell, we did not kill him," cries the one who has first spoken.



"How am I to know you did not?" leading him on.

"We can prove it."

"Sit down!" commanded the officer. Then, the two obeying him, he says:

"I know nearly all the facts of this case, boys. I am in search of the balance. I don't propose to get you into trouble, unless you force me to. I am dead onto you, and you know it, and so I am going to give you an opportunity to clear yourselves. First, what does Nick know that you fear he will confess?"

"You heard what we said when we came in here?" cries the man.

"Well, what if I did? Come, you had better talk quick, for if Nick does know anything in connection with the affair, he may die without saying a word, and then you will find it much more difficult to establish your proofs."

The two exchange glances, then he who has done all the talking, says slowly:

"Nick knows it all. We don't know much about it, only this:

"The morning before the dead man was found, the three of us were in the express office, and accidentally saw a money envelope addressed to Roger Deveaux, Brown's Hotel. It was for twenty-five hundred, and the idea struck me that we might just as well have that money, and I thought it possible that we might get it.

"I hang out around on High street, not far from Brown's and have often seen these two men, the dummy and the blind fellow. I knew Deveaux was the blind man, and it came to me that it wouldn't be a very hard job to touch him for the stuff. Just watchin' a chance when the other was away.

"So we spotted 'em all that day, and got the lay of their room.



"There is a fire escape runnin' from the alley back of the house to the top floor, and we found out the two queer pals slept in room 47, which opened on the escape, so that night we went to the spot and drew straws who would go up the escape and do the work, there bein' no use of the three of us takin' chances, when one man could do it just as well. Of course, we could all be near enough to give a hand in case of trouble. Nick drew the straw, and went up the ladder—we brought a ten-foot one with us to reach the bottom of the escape. He was up there a devilish long time. We could see him standin' on the landing at the top, and so knew he was all right. After waitin' over an hour, might have been two, we saw him raise the window and go into the room. He didn't stay there long. In about five minutes he came out and come down the escape in a hurry.

" 'What kept you so long?' we both said.

" 'A damned tough affair,' he said back. 'A fellow has just croaked himself up there, an' we had better git away from here quick, or we're liable to git pinched for murder, if we're found.'

"He had the stuff; found it in the dead man's 'grip,' and as we run along the streets he told us all about the whole business."

"He saw the blind man take his own life?" cries the officer.

"Yes—with a razor. He told us all he saw and heard."

"That is enough. I have learned all I wish to know. Come with me, and just as quickly as you can. No harm shall come to you. I am not going to lock you up"—the two showing hesitation. "I never go back on my word, boys, and you know it, but we must get to Nick before he dies."



"We ain't had our dinner yet," growls the fellow, the one who has remained silent throughout the scene, save to corroborate his companion's words by sundry grunts and emphatic expletives.

"Never mind your dinner," cries Treadwell, impatiently. "If you've ordered it, I'll pay for it, and give you a better one after we are through. Come, we must go to Nick. It is important to obtain his deposition before he leaves the world."

In breathless haste they hurry from the restaurant, Treadwell throwing two dollars upon the cashier's desk to pay for the ordered but uneaten meal, and then, fortunately catching a cab, the three are driven to the hospital where the wounded burglar has been taken.

They are in time; the man is not yet dead, but very near the shore of eternity. It takes but a few moments to arrange for his dying deposition, and when it is all over, and the unfortunate criminal lies dead before him, Daniel Treadwell is in possession of evidence that corroborates the statement made by Mrs. Herschel, evidence sufficient to free the imprisoned, suffering man, and set his mind at ease.

Nick has witnessed the entire affair, has heard every word that was spoken, seen every gesture, and, when the two women have left the room, he has clambered through the window, locked the door to prevent intrusion, and securing the money, has made a hasty departure. And even more. The man, as his breath grows shorter, informs the officer where the money has been secreted—they had not divided it as yet, and aided by the two men who had been instrumental—although unconsciously—in bringing about the fortunate end, he secures it, and rewards the criminals liberally.



With a happy heart, he returns to Barnum's Hotel, to carry the glad tidings that the clouds of night have been dispelled, that the sun of a new day of glorious promise has appeared upon the horizon.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## SUNSHINE.

Mrs. Herschel, looking almost ghastly pale, admits him, answering his impetuous rap.

"Well?" she faintly murmurs.

"God has answered your petition," he says simply, turning to Rachel, who is standing near the bed, in an attitude of expectancy.

A flush suffuses her pale face, her eyes turn thankfully upward.

"You have discovered something new?" gladly cries the mother.

"Yes, and a something that puts matters in proper shape," he replies.

She motions him to a chair, and when they have become seated, he quickly tells her all, concluding by saying:

"If the hand of Providence cannot be plainly seen in all this, then I am no judge of the matter at all."

The mother slowly nods an affirmative, and then thoughtfully asks:

"And the next step—"

"Is to go to your husband, and get him out of his miserable cell, then to disabuse his mind of the horrible suspicion that is bearing him down to the earth."

"Will he be freed at once?"

"Just as soon as I can get the necessary papers, and un-



der the circumstances that won't take long. Come, we had better be off at once," rising.

The woman hesitates.

"Is it best for me to go?" she begins.

He hastily interrupts her.

"Absolutely," he says, firmly. "You need not see him first. I will break the news, then Rachel can go to him and pave the way. I have the utmost confidence in her ability to successfully perform her part. He will not hold out long—depend on it."

"I pray that it may be as you say," she murmurs, "but I will abide by your judgment, Mr. Treadwell. You, perhaps, know best."

"Perhaps? No—I am sure I do," warmly.

They are soon ready for the street, Treadwell going to the office below, to order a carriage, while the necessary changes of costume are being made. In a short time they are being whirled to the prison, Treadwell strong and hopeful, the mother clasping the hand of her child nervously, while the girl whispers words of cheering hope in her ear.

\* \* \* \* \*

With a sharp click, the bolt shoots back in its socket, then, with a rattling of chains and a creaking, rasping sound, the door of Henry Allen's cell opens wide, while the turnkey calls out gruffly:

"You're wanted below."

The dumb man glances inquiringly into the man's face, and then, taking his tablet from his pocket, writes:

"Who wishes to see me?"

"Dan Treadwell."

The furrowed face lights up, the expressive eyes giving evidence of pleasure.



Silently he follows the uniformed official along the corridors, down a flight of iron steps, to the private reception room, and then a warm welcome expressed in every action, he finds the detective awaiting his coming.

A stride on the part of each, and the two men are clasping hands. Then the prisoner releasing the hand of the other, writes:

"I am glad to see you."

"And I am glad to be obliged to make you a visit," replies Dan, seating himself, an example which is followed by the dumb man.

"Now that we are comfortably fixed, I have a bit of news for you," begins the detective.

A glance of inquiry from the other.

"Yes, and decidedly good news, as I look upon it. You will probably remember that upon the occasion of your visit to me, I registered a vow to save you," pausing. A sad shake of the head. "Don't think it possible, eh? Well, Mr. Allen, I have come to tell you that you will not have the pleasure of having your neck stretched."

Allen springs to his feet, Treadwell following his example.

"No," he hurries on, "it has been discovered that you did not kill Roger Deveau, and so shall not suffer the penalty. But wait a minute," perceiving the wild look of anxiety that comes to the eyes of his companion, "don't worry. She is all right. She did not murder him, either." Then placing his hand upon the trembling man's shoulder, he says, earnestly:

"Sir, I know the full particulars of your whole sad story. I know you are not Henry Allen, and that Roger Deveau was your half brother, Ralph Dean. I know you to be Lorraine Herschel, and let me tell you, dear sir, there is a happier future in store for you."



Lorraine Herschel shrinks from him, and then, raising his eyes to the detective's face, fixes a look of inquiring import upon him.

"Oh, you wish to know how I gained my information. You think, perhaps, your wife has told me? No; she tried to keep it from me, but, thank God, the facts came to me in spite of all. See," he turns and points to the confession, which he has previously arranged upon the table. Herschel devotes one rapid glance upon it, and then, turning to his tablet, writes:

"How did you obtain possession of this?"

Briefly Treadwell tells him all, pausing and gazing with the deepest sympathy upon the grief of the man when he learns that his loved companion, his brother, has ended his own life—a grief deep, profound and touching, from which he arouses himself at last and turns as though to leave the apartment.

"Mr. Herschel," speaks the detective.

The sorrowing man halts.

"There is more to tell."

"Let me tell it," murmurs a soft, sweet voice behind them. They turn and behold Rachel—Rachel, who hastens to her father's side and places one shapely arm about his neck and draws his face down to the level of her own and then kisses him. With a gladsome light shining from out his eyes, the father rains kisses upon the upturned lips of his daughter.

Treadwell becomes interested in the fire which is burning in the open grate; not so interested, however, that he does not hear the maiden say:

"Forgive her, father! pardon my mother; for she is my mother. She brought me into the world, and you, my father, love her yet. Yes, in spite of all, I feel you love







her yet. Forgive her, father. Ah, me! she has suffered, too. She has paid the bitter penalty of one rash step." Then so softly and reverently: "Christ forgave even those who nailed him upon the cross, father."

The detective turns quickly, turns in time to see the wife of Lorraine Herschel standing in the opposite door, gazing beseechingly upon her husband, who stands clasping his child in his arms. He can see the struggle that is raging within the man, and then sees him put the girl gently aside and open wide his arms, into which the wife throws herself with a glad cry.

The scene is too sacred for him to intrude upon.

He softly crosses the room and makes his exit unnoticed.

Upon returning some fifteen minutes later a scene of happiness meets his vision. The three are sitting together on the low divan near the grate, the father and husband between the two whom he loves.

He rises as Treadwell enters and approaches him, the wife and child following him.

"He knows all," cries the girl.

"And has forgiven all," adds the wife.

Lorraine Herschel has reached the table. He takes up the confession and, turning to the grate, casts it upon the living coals.

It burns slowly at first, but finally catches and is soon in ashes, then, turning to the wife and child, he clasps them in his arms.

(FINIS.)



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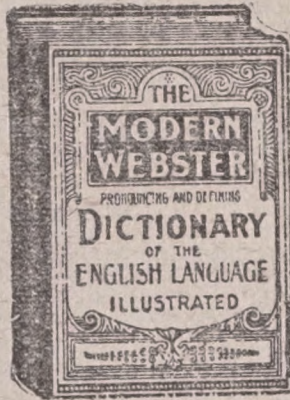
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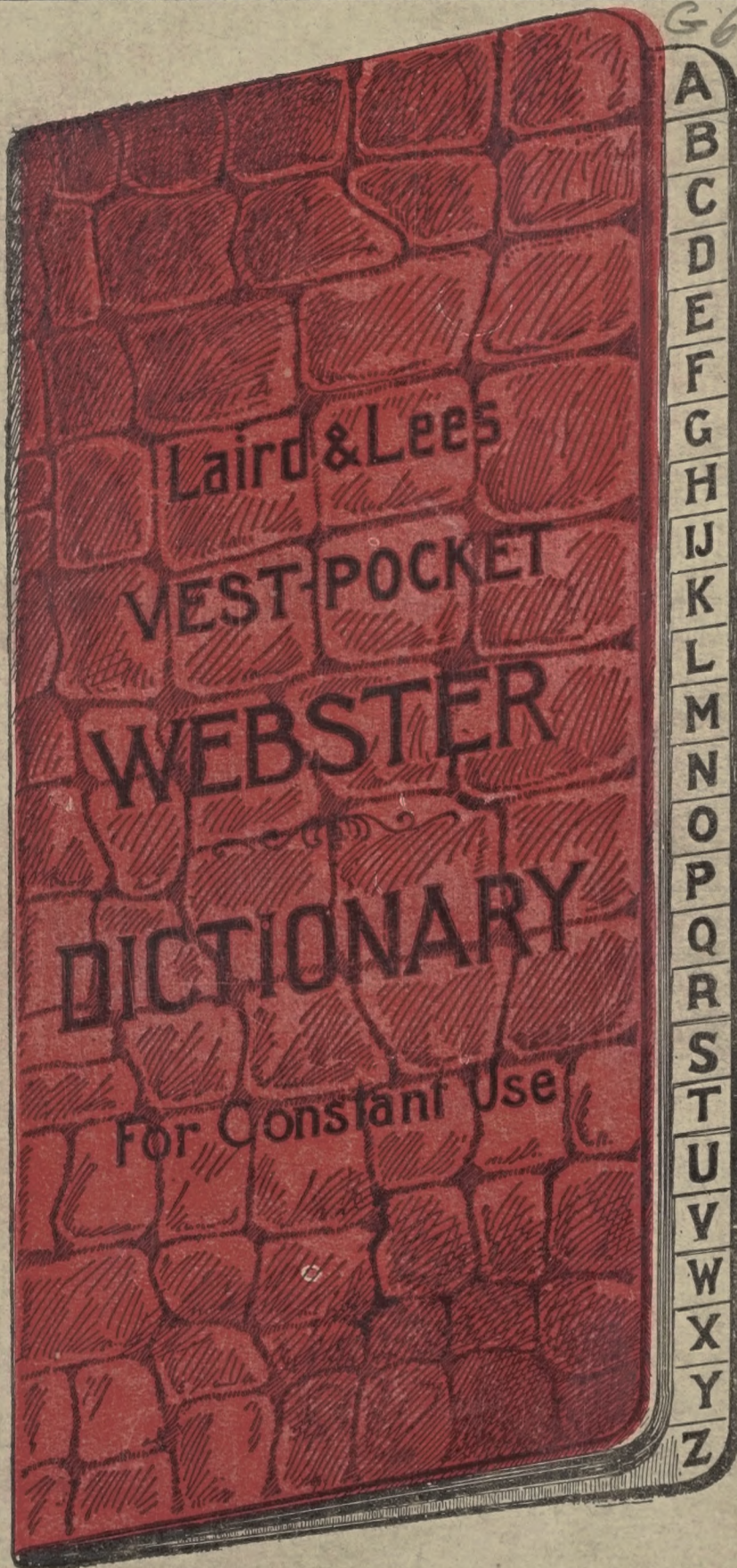
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